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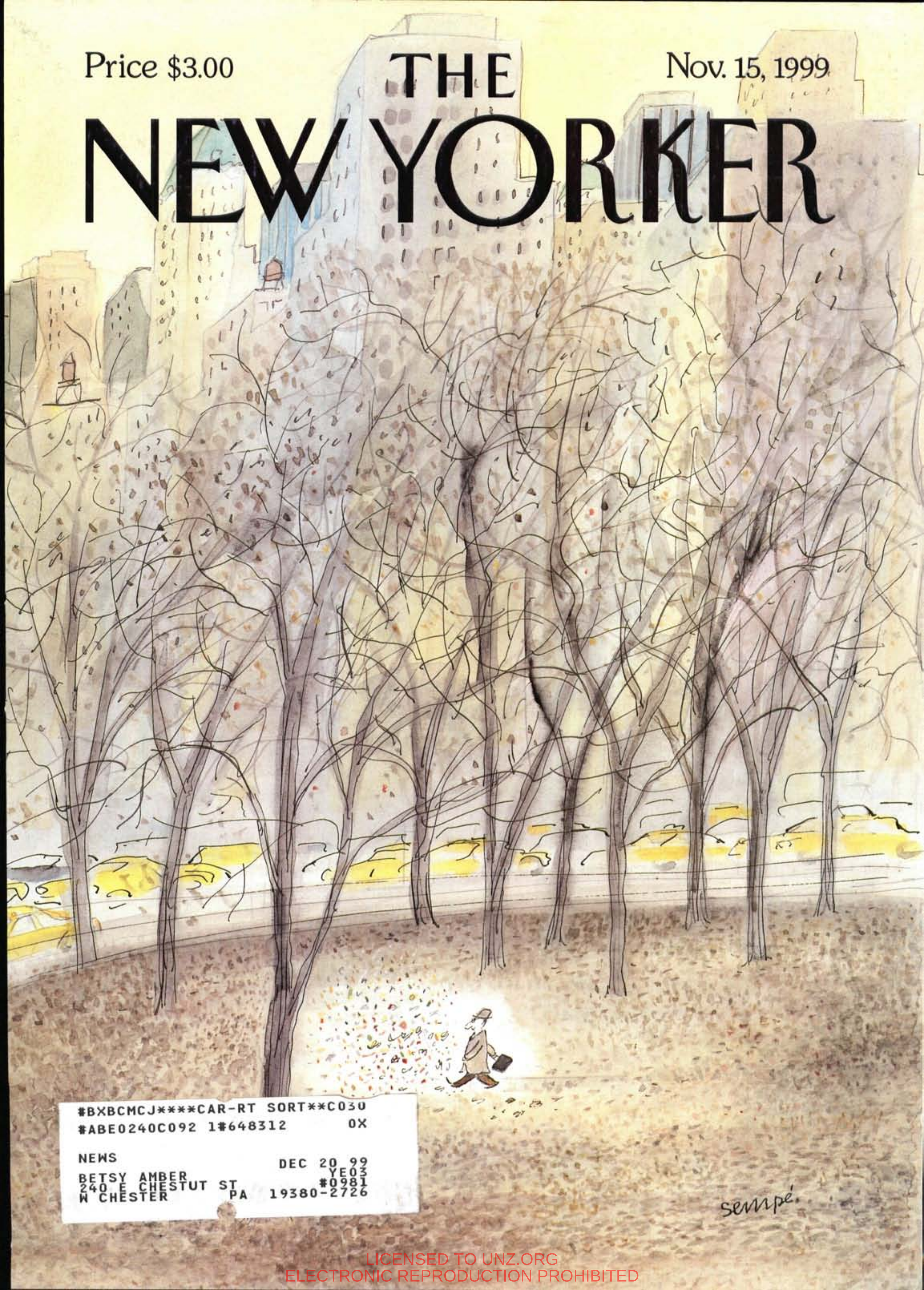
Nov. 15, 1999



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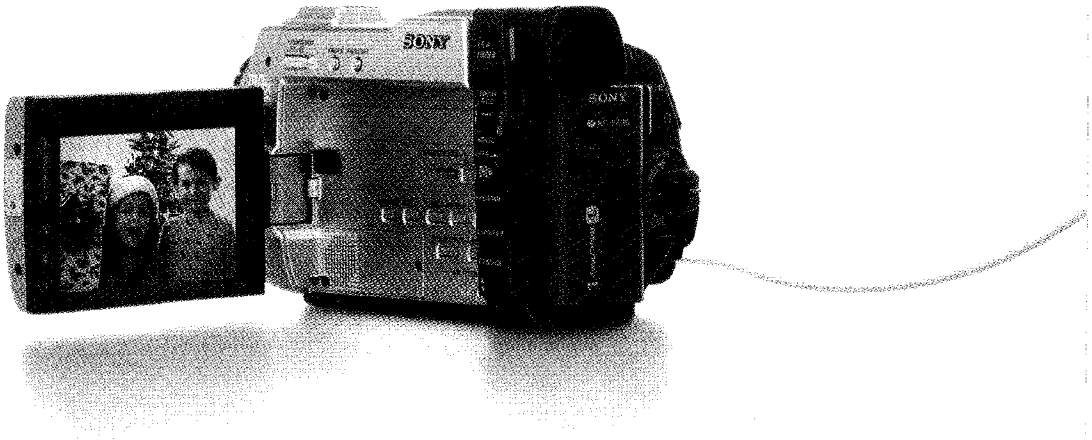

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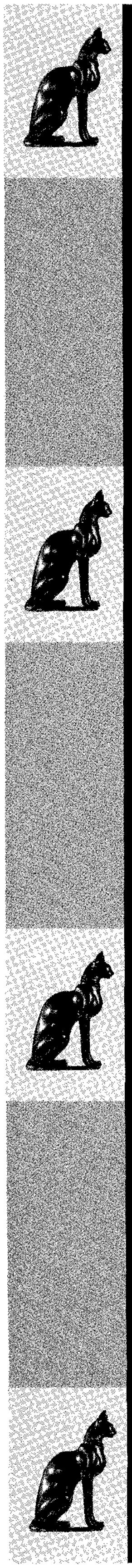

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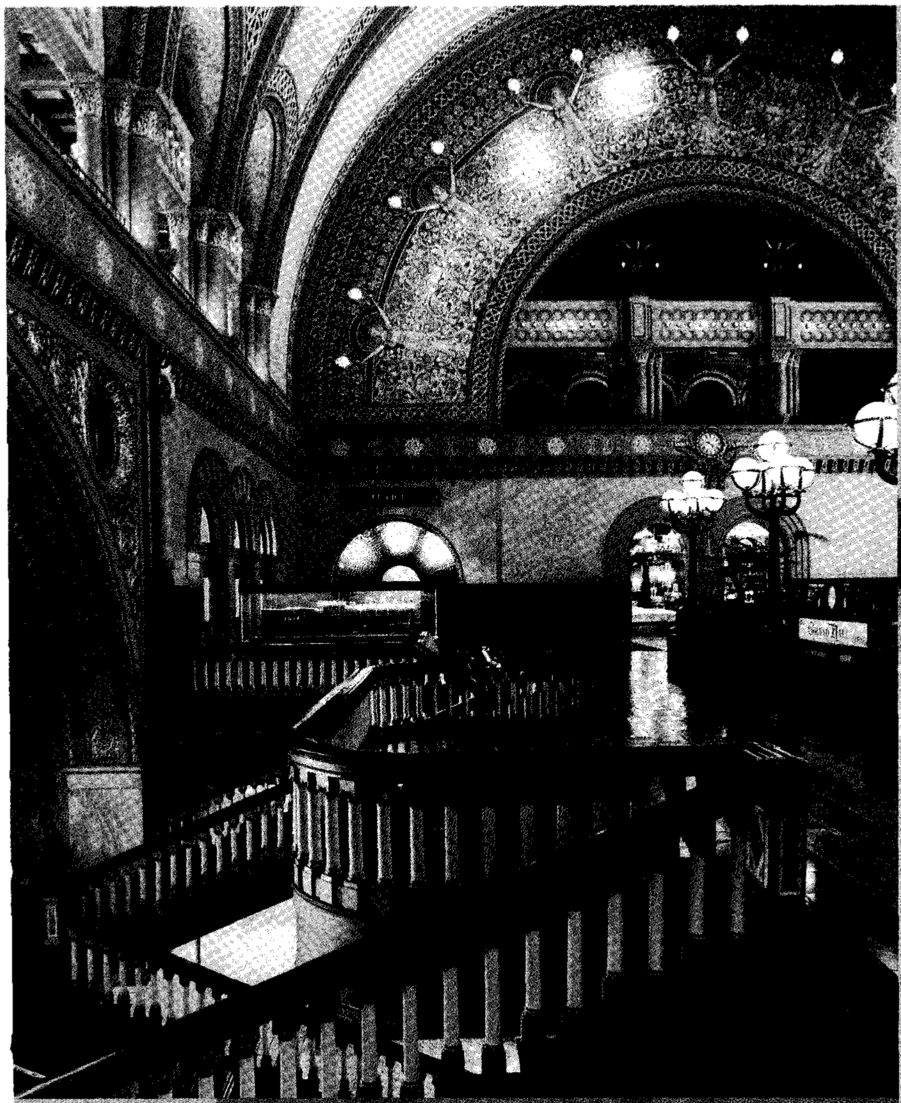

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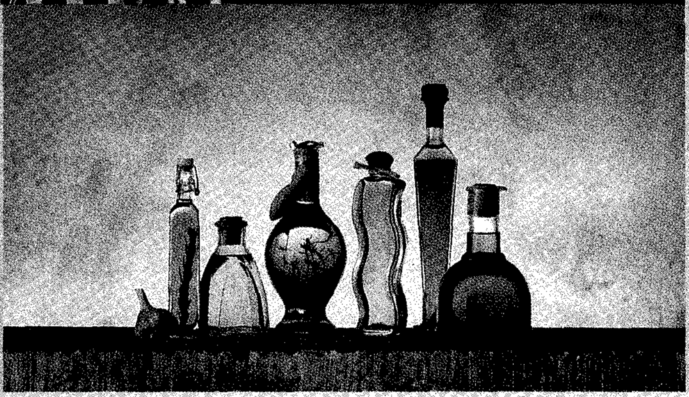

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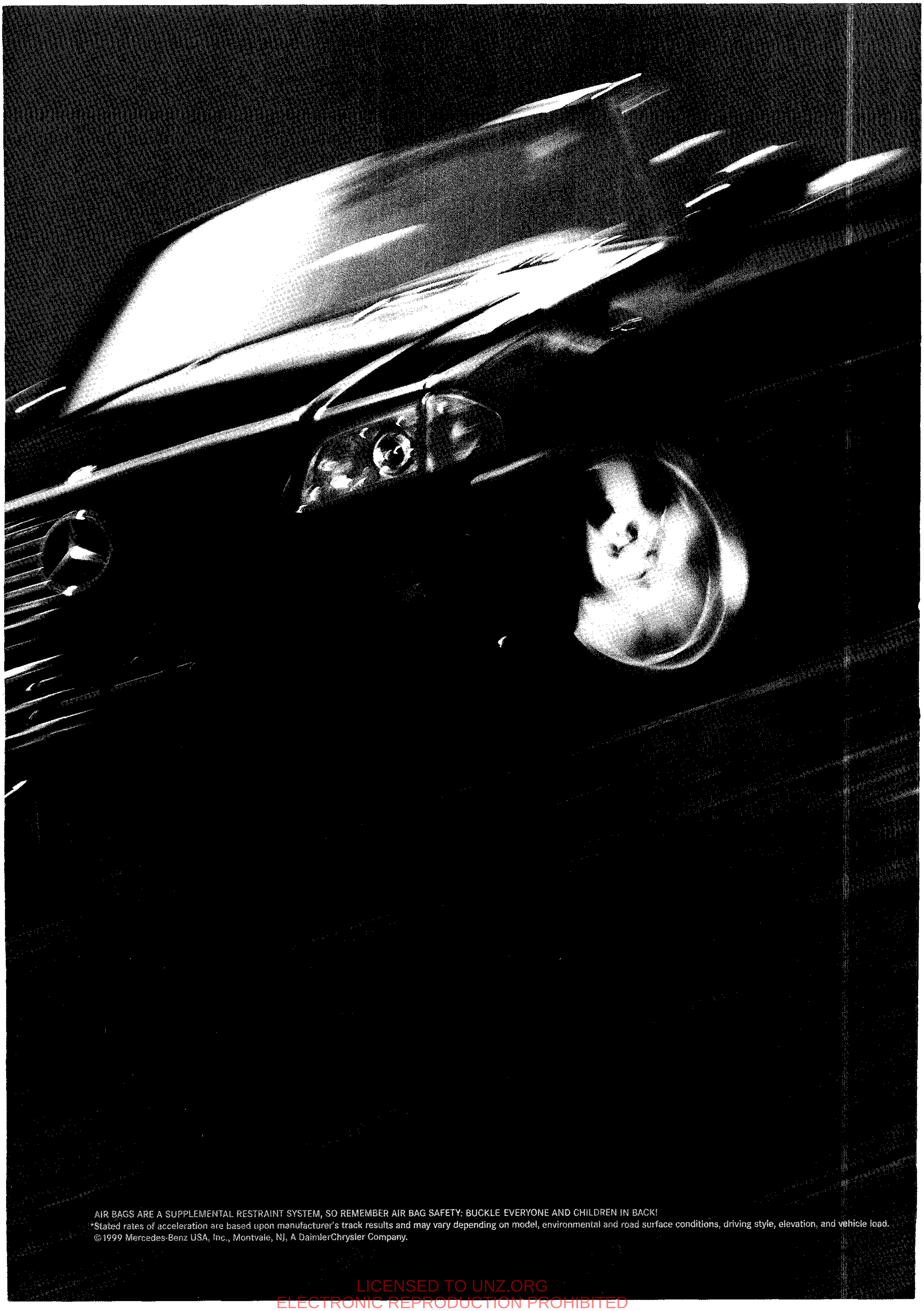

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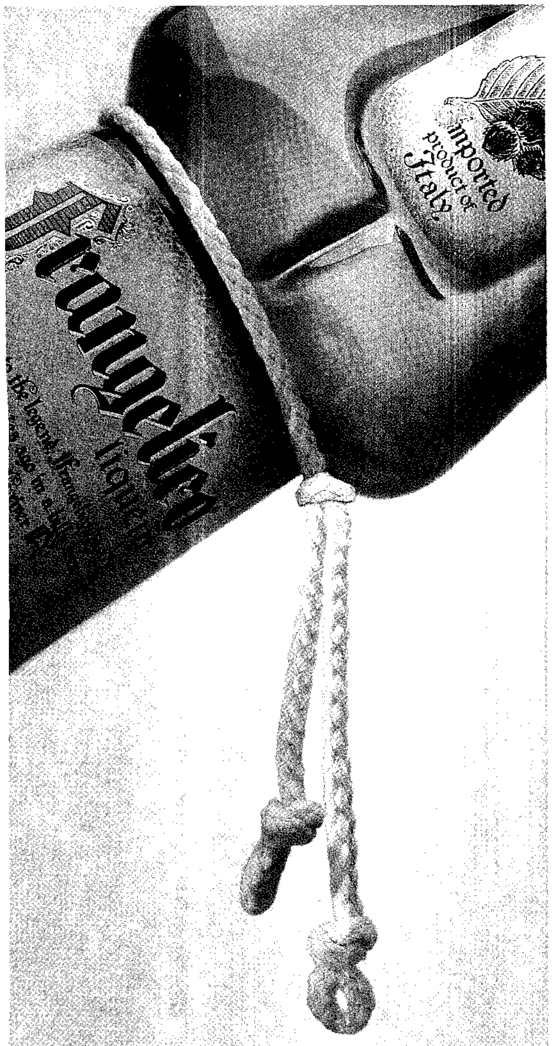

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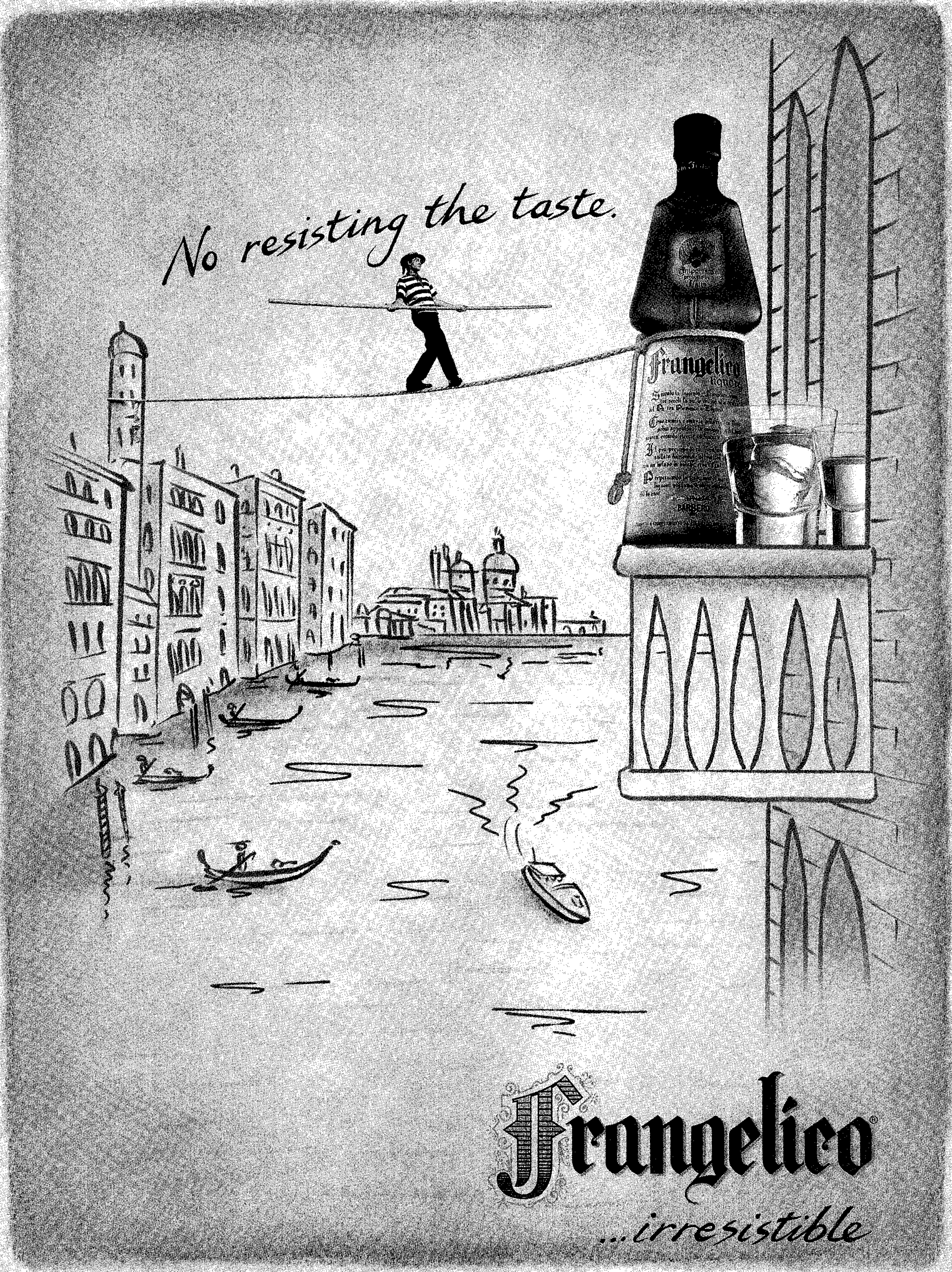
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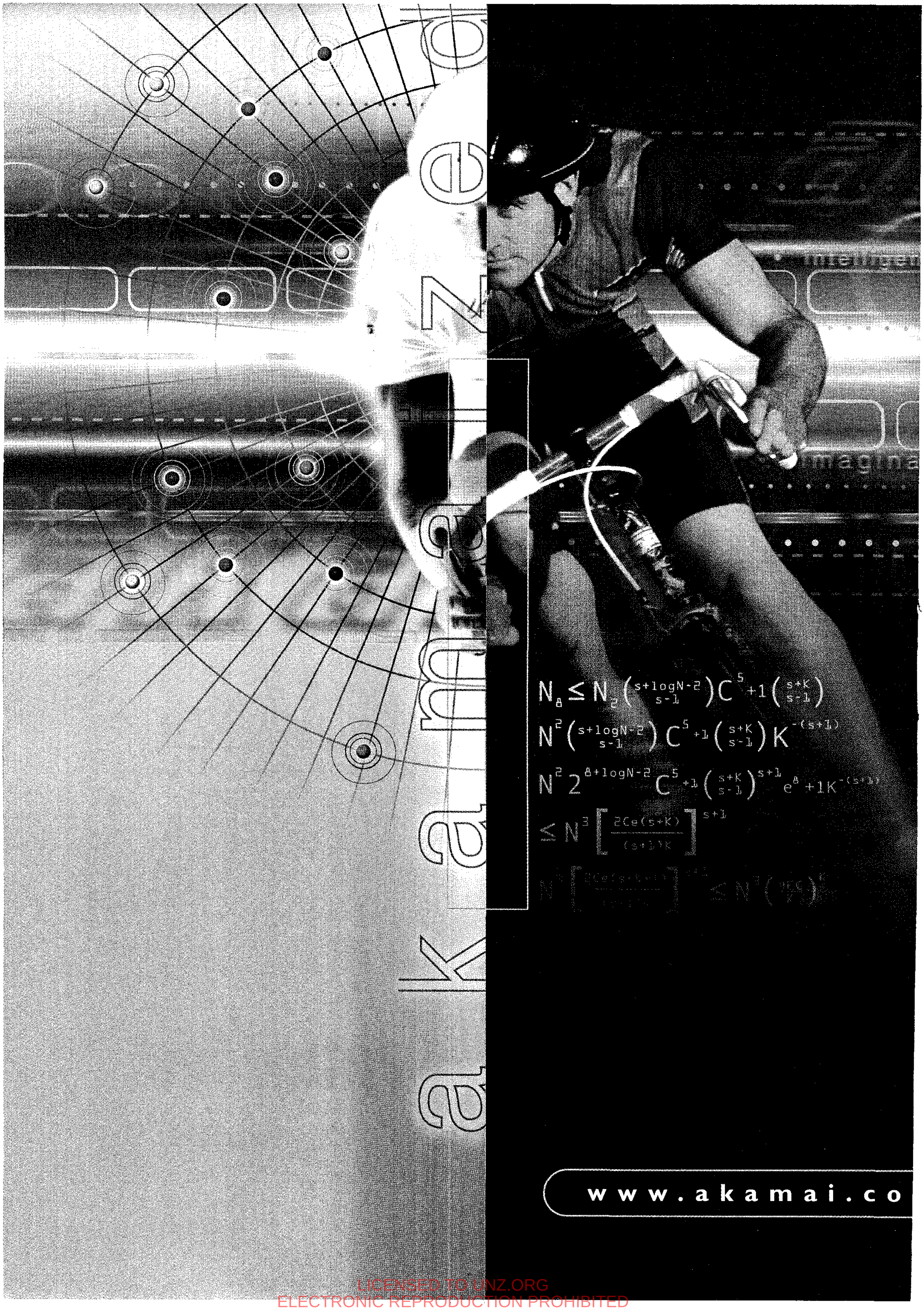
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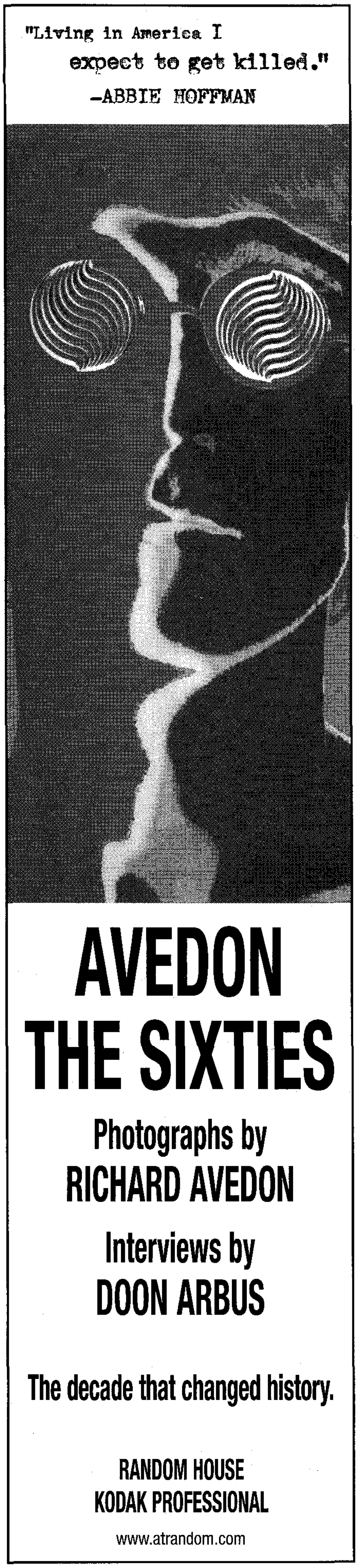

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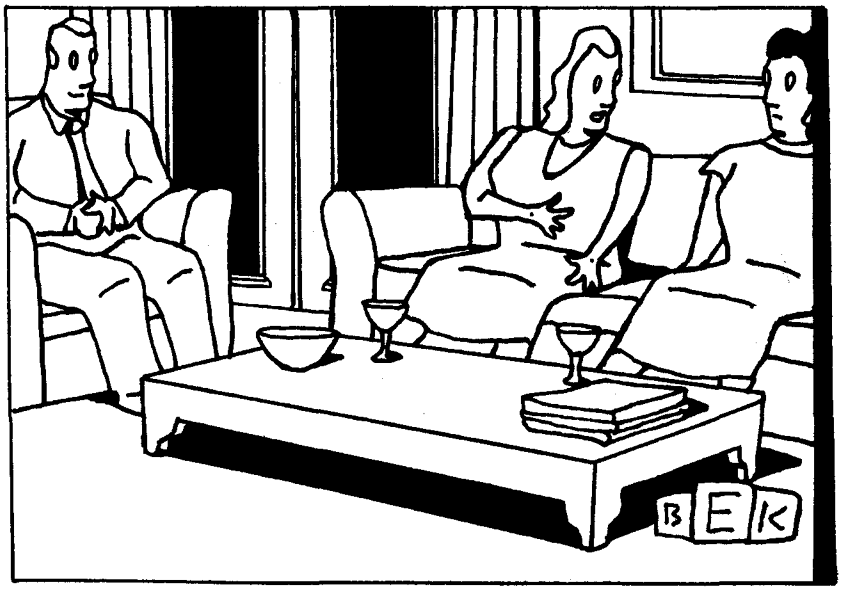

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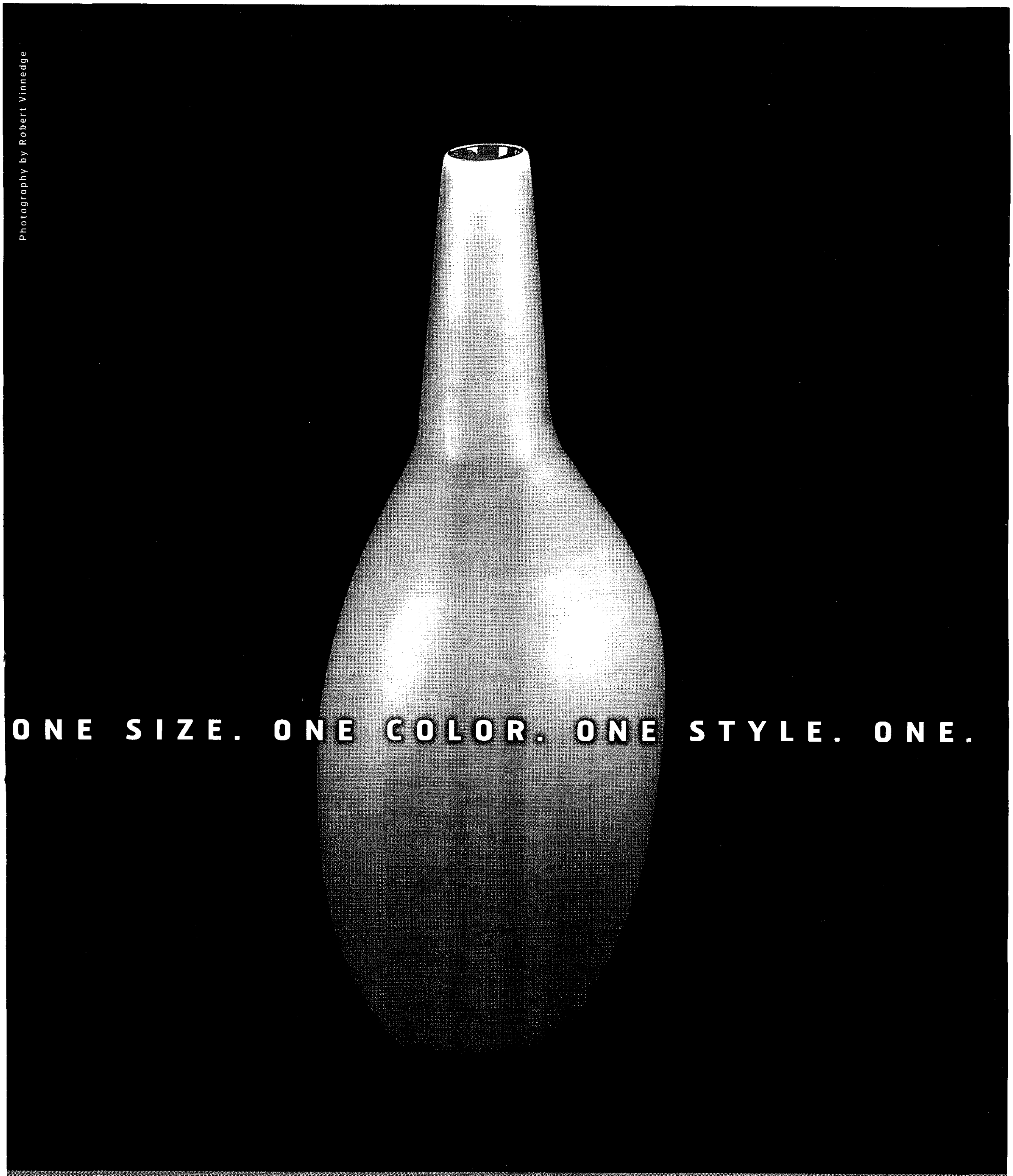

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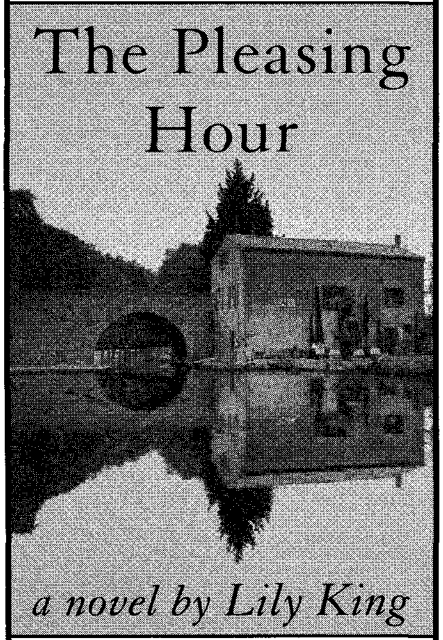

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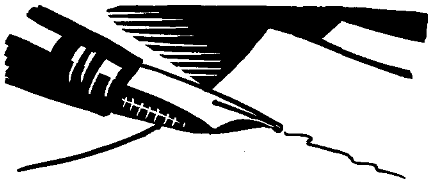

THE REAGAN ENIGMA

Readers of Edmund Morris's biography of Ronald Reagan, "Dutch," will no doubt have their skepticism fuelled by Hendrik Hertzberg's searing critique (Books, October 11th). But perhaps they'll be more sympathetic to Morris's plight if they read his book in light of Simon Schama's essay on portraiture ("The Naked Rembrandt," also October 11th). Schama cites Baudelaire's observation that portraits are models complicated by artists, and notes that portraits involve a three-way negotiation between the sitter's sense of self, the painter's perception of that self, and the social conventions imposed by the audience. So we could view Morris as an honest portrait artist who became exasperated by the opacity of his model and overwhelmed by the difficulty of reconciling his honest awe at Reagan's narcissism with the mixed expectations of his audience, some of whom revere Reagan's political heroism and others of whom would cynically accept any depiction of Reagan as a conventionally shallow figure.

Morris, lacking the artistic confidence of Rembrandt, evinces desperation rather than creativity by inserting his own fictional self into his book, and, more egregiously, a fictional son. But perhaps Morris sincerely felt he had to put himself into his portrait of Reagan in order to convince readers of "Dutch" that he made a good-faith effort to empathize with Ronald Reagan's own surrealistic sense of self.

SUSAN M. WEISBERG
ROBERT WEISBERG
Stanford, Calif.

IT'S A HARD-KNOCK LIFE

I spent the last few years in New York City watching my life spin within an uncontrollable centrifuge, all the while thinking that it was my naïveté and my inability to manage finances that were keeping me from having the best years of my life. But Meghan Daum ("My Misspent Youth," October 18th & 25th) addresses an issue that most New Yorkers blithely ignore: New York may not be the city of horrors it once was, but, thanks to Giuliani's recent scrubbing and Wall Street's winning streak, it has become virtually impossible to live well in the city as a single person. It's a Herculean feat to survive such a place, and many of us eventually talk ourselves into thinking that other towns are cheaper and also have museums, and other benefits we couldn't find in New York City (although we don't really know what they are). But there's nothing more embarrassing than having to leave the city because you knew you couldn't conquer it.

JACQUELINE GECAN
Chicago, Ill.

Much as I enjoyed the juicy details of Meghan Daum's litany of urban angst, I'm confused—what's her beef? Rather than being the cautionary tale she surely intended, her story seems to me a success story of a young woman fortunate enough to get a B.A. from Vassar and an M.F.A. from Columbia and then go on to earn as much as seventy-eight thousand dollars annually by the tender age of twenty-nine. Before you know it, we'll be seeing articles about the tragic struggles of a futures trader who had to give up his Park Avenue co-op or the trials and tribulations of a kept woman who overspent her clothing allowance.

GERRY VISCO
New York City

CORRECTION: In a Talk of the Town story on the Los Angeles *Times Book Review* (September 27th), we misstated the extent of literary critic Carlin Romano's research. Romano looked at a hundred and ninety-four reviews published by the *Book Review*, not at a hundred and ninety-four issues.

•

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

1839—Gale Gates et al.'s new production is a multimedia meditation on the mind of Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, the inventor of the daguerreotype. Previews begin Nov. 11. (37 Main St., Brooklyn. 718-522-4597.)

In the Blood—Suzan-Lori Parks's new play is a modern take on Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter." In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Kiss Me, Kate—Brian Stokes Mitchell and Marin Mazzie star in a revival of the Cole Porter musical, under the direction of Michael Blakemore. In previews. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

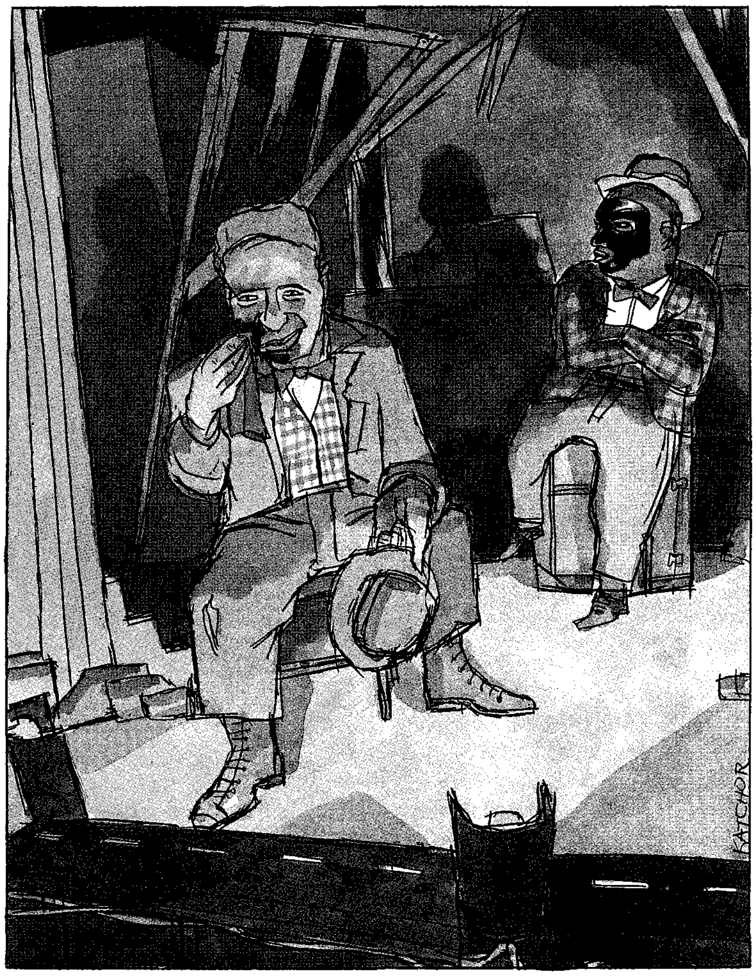
Marie Christine—In Michael John LaChiusa's new musical, set in New Orleans in the eighteen-hundreds, Audra McDonald portrays a woman obsessed with love for a sea captain (Anthony Crivello). Graciela Daniele is the director. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Price—A revival of Arthur Miller's 1968 play. James Naughton is the director. In previews through Nov. 14. Opens Nov. 15 at 6:45. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Putting It Together—A revue celebrating the songs of Stephen Sondheim, starring Carol Burnett. Directed by Eric D. Schaeffer. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Rainmaker—Jayne Atkinson and Woody Harrelson star in the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of Richard Nash's 1954 drama. Scott Ellis is the director. Two previews on Nov. 10. Opens Nov. 11 at 6:30. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

Swing!—A musical salute to the dance movement, starring the jazz vocalist Ann Hampton Callaway. Directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. In previews. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



Spencer Scott Barros and Tim Cain, in "Minstrel Show," by Max Sparber.

Tango Argentino—The dance revue, in a limited-engagement encore staging. Previews begin Nov. 11. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Y2K—James Naughton and Patricia Kalember portray an affluent New York couple whose lives are turned upside down by a computer hacker, in a drama by Arthur Kopit. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200).

OPENED RECENTLY

Ancestral Voices—A staged reading, with a rotating cast, of A. R. Gurney's play. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Atlantic Theatre Company—The troupe offers a season of plays by David Mamet. First up: "The Water Engine" and "Mr. Happiness." (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

Contact—The director and choreographer Susan Stroman's dance play, co-conceived with John Weidman, is a triptych of simple stories which proposes that dance and dancers can revive the musical. It's about the various forms of human connection, the atmosphere of longing, and it's a big-hearted, witty crowd-pleaser—startling and fresh and free from the infernal pretentiousness of Broadway. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/18-25/99.) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Country Club—Douglas Carter Beane's satire on the young suburban set is loaded with witty dialogue, and the production is graced by the Drama Dept.'s always good acting and a fine set, but Beane's writing suffers from a peculiar shallowness almost worthy of his characters. They satirize themselves, too, but it all has the effect of a valentine rather than a biting sendup. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 541-8441.)

Cranes—Scott Elliott directs the New Group in a drama by Dmitry Lipkin, about two Russian-Jewish immigrant families. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 14.)

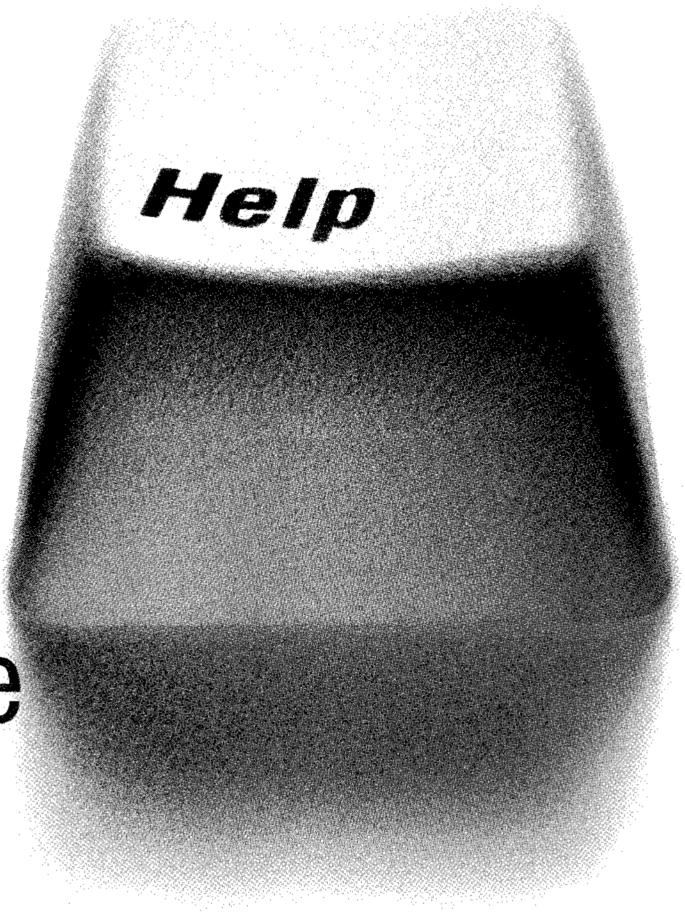
Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Calling all possums: the singer, swami, grief counsellor, and children's book illustrator makes her Broadway début. (11/1/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinner with Friends—Donald Margulies's latest play is a drama about two couples whose friendship changes when one of them decides to divorce. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Eclipsed—Patricia Burke Brogan's drama, set in Ireland, follows the lives of four unwed mothers forced to labor as penitents in a convent laundry. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

Epic Proportions—A spoof of the making of a Biblical movie on location in the Arizona desert during the early thirties; it dramatizes many plagues, but no plague greater than the one that corporate culture has visited on Broadway in the last few years. What's strange in a piece that has no ear for the moment is that it contains the pitch-perfect performance of Kristin Chenoweth, a comedienne of terrific originality and charm. (10/18-25/99) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Exact Center of the Universe—Joan Vail Thorne's small-town comedy, starring Frances Sternhagen. (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)



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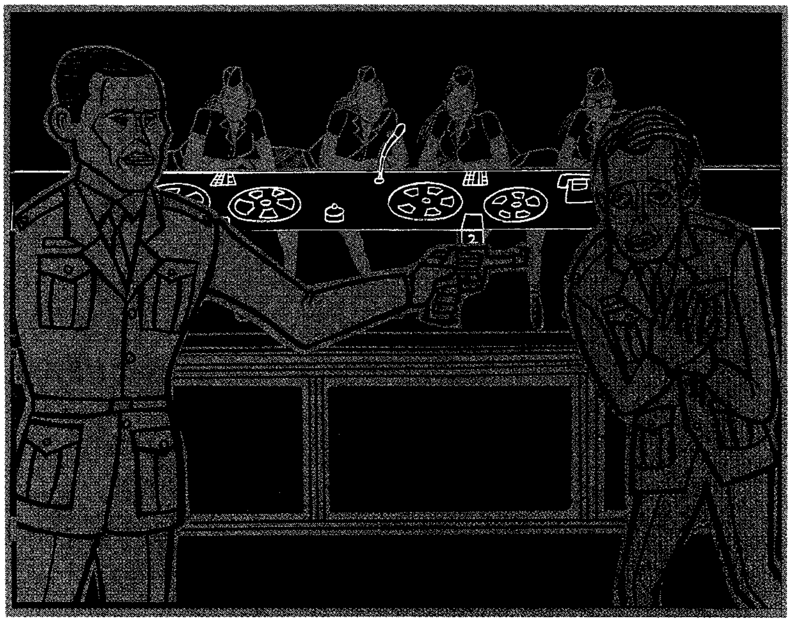
An Experiment with an Air Pump—The odd title of Shelagh Stevenson's play describes a study carried out by its eighteenth-century characters; their attempt to determine how much oxygen deprivation animals can endure neatly encapsulates the play's themes—the relationships between science and morality, scientific passion and love, knowledge and society's stability—which are explored with humor and intelligence. Set both at the end of the eighteenth century and on our own upcoming millennial New Year's Eve, the play smoothly plumbs its engaging characters' fears of the future while puncturing our pompous notion that this New Year is different from all others. The cast, led by Linda Emond and Daniel Gerroll, is uniformly fine; deftly directed by Doug Hughes. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 313 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)



Willem Dafoe and Steve Buscemi, in the Wooster Group's "North Atlantic."

Fuddy Meers—The very promising playwright David Lindsay-Abaire's kitchen-sink comedy goes so over the top that you might miss the melancholy beneath the absurd chaos. In a cast of characters (played by the best comic ensemble in years) which includes a blissful amnesiac, a maimed criminal with a speech impediment, a protective mother whose stroke has rendered her Caryl Churchill cryptic, and a sweet kook who expresses his anger with a hand puppet, no one is who they seem and everyone is connected in surprising ways, and through surprising needs—the *Über*-dysfunctional family? The point seems to be that in this upside-down world, saying what you need to say is not only difficult but also a privilege, and memory is as much a burden as a blessing. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Give Me Your Answer, Do!—In Brian Friel's latest drama, two Irish friends and novelists, one a commercial failure, the other a best-seller, come together with their wives (and some in-laws and a literary archivist) for a late-summer afternoon of cocktails and angst. The whole thing builds to a vaguely "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" fervor in the second act, but the performances are exhilarating, so you forgive the unnecessarily melodramatic ending. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

I Love Dick—From Mabou Mines, an adaptation of the autobiographical novel by Chris Kraus, in which a woman's crush on a cultural critic inspires her husband to fall for him, too. Wednesdays through Sundays at 8, through Nov. 28. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 473-0559.)

James Joyce's The Dead—A musical version of the short story. (11/8/99) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 14.)

Kat and the Kings—A rock-and-roll musical set in Cape Town in 1957. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Keep Bangin'—"Stomp" showed that you can cook up an evening of theatre out of percussion alone, but this show proves it better. It's an unslick production—the point is the drumming alone. The ten-man cast is led by Jared Crawford, who, with his million-toothed smile, firestorm of dreads, and rare genius, lifts the whole thing into a kind of art heaven. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 254-5076.)

Look Back in Anger—A Classic Stage Company revival of John Osborne's 1956 drama. (136 E. 13th St. 677-4210, ext. 10. Closes Nov. 14.)

Maybe Baby, It's You—Shari Simpson and Charlie Shanian portray eleven couples looking for love, in a comedy they co-wrote. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

Minstrel Show; or, the Lynching of William Brown—The playwright Max Sparber has taken the startling step of telling the story of a 1919 lynching in Omaha, Nebraska, through the testimony of two fictional blackface minstrels who witnessed it all. It's easy to forget how much intelligence and sheer talent it takes to transform pain into any kind of crowd-pleasing humor; the triumph of this play—realized by two subtle, powerful actors, Spencer Scott Barros and Tim Cain, and the director, Rob Urbinati—is that the audience is constantly entertained but never allowed to forget about the minstrels' degrading world. In that context the lynching seems entirely normal—and all the more horrific for it. In the end, what may be the most startling thing about using these entertainers to teach us our history is the disturbing resonance it creates within our celebrity-filled era. (Connelly Theatre, 220 E. 4th St. 279-4200. Closes Nov. 14.)

Morning, Noon and Night—Spalding Gray's latest monologue. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

North Atlantic—A multimedia work in progress from the Wooster Group. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes Nov. 21.)

Sail Away—Elaine Stritch re-creates the role of Mimi Paragon for a concert staging of Noël Coward's 1961 musical, in which she originally starred. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Closes Nov. 13.)

Saturday Night Fever—The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Showy Lady Slipper—Richard Maxwell's new show consists mostly of the gossipy conversation of three female friends awaiting a visit from the alpha-girl's boyfriend. The conversation is stunning in its banality, but, like a good pop song, it has surprising resonances, and Maxwell's distinctive style—actors as poker-faced conduits for dialogue, chunky staging, sobriety-test movement—is hilarious. The boyfriend finally does arrive, and tragedy and redemption ensue, but the fundamental pleasure is in the language—and in the harmonious, ridiculous songs (this is a musical, by the way) that the actors break into during their most emotional moments. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Closes Nov. 14.)

Stars in Your Eyes—A musical by Chip Meyrelles, set in two small towns during the Kennedy Administration. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Uncle Jack—The Worth Street Theatre presents Jeff Cohen's contemporary adaptation of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya," set in rural West Virginia. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 604-4195.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler's one-woman show, which she first performed in New York three years ago Off-Off Broadway, is based on interviews she conducted with two hundred women about their vaginas: the body part itself, the word, and why "it never sounds like a word you want to say" no matter how many times you say it. There's a certain amount of shtick involved—Ensler asked women what their vaginas would wear if they got dressed, and she offers up a litany of nicknames for "down there"—but most of the stories she tells are touching and memorable. Often sadly so: Ensler makes you realize that when it comes to treating women and their bodies with real respect, the world still has miles to go. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THINGS YOU SHOULDN'T SAY PAST MIDNIGHT:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE WEIR:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. (Closes Nov. 28.) . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

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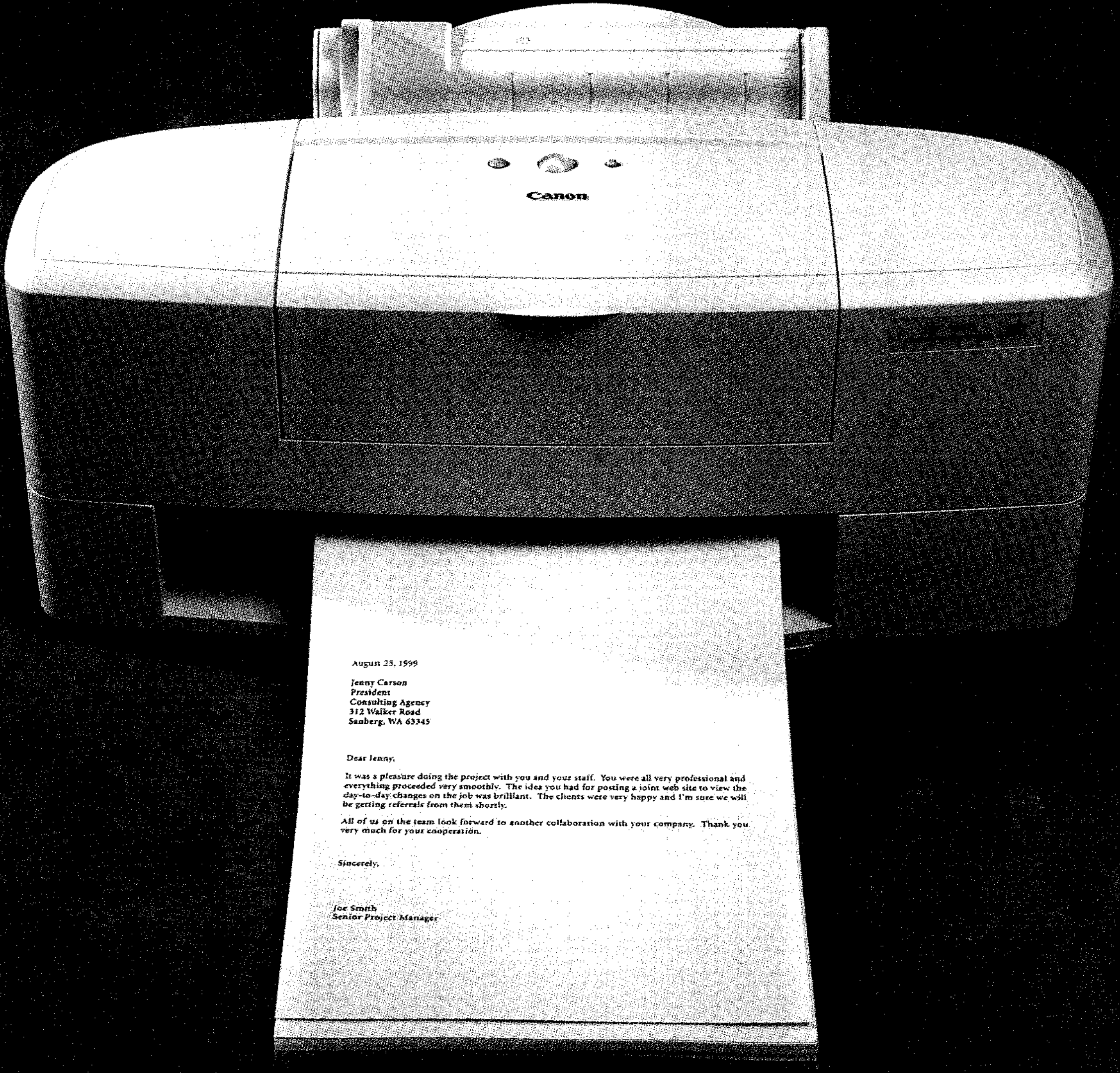

August 23, 1999

Jenny Carson
President
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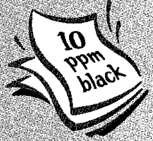

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DANCE

"Hiyomeki (within a gentle vibration and agitation)"—The five bald dancers of Sankai Juku, from Tokyo's Ginza Theatre, who talc their bodies and move with organic deliberation, present their signature brand of radiant Butoh. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 10-13 at 7:30 and Nov. 14 at 3.)

Garth Fagan Dance—The Jamaican-born choreographer of "The Lion King" brings his Rochester-based company for a two-week engagement that includes the première of "Woza," which means "come" and "come celebrate" in Zulu, and revivals of "Postscript Posthumous: Ellington" and "Oatka Trail." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 9-13 and Nov. 16 at 8, and Nov. 14 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 21.)

Dance Theatre Workshop—A festival of genre-crossing in the dance and performance-art venue. Nov. 9-11 at 8: "Dominicanish," by Josefina Baez, who mixes poetry, nonsense texts, and the Kuchipudi dance traditions of Southeast India, and "My Affair with the Teacher," by Jenny Bass, who uses transcripts of conversations with Balanchine's various muses . . . ¶ Nov. 12-13 at 8 and Nov. 14 at 3: The Elementals, a comic puppet-theatre group, in "Bunkbed Commando." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

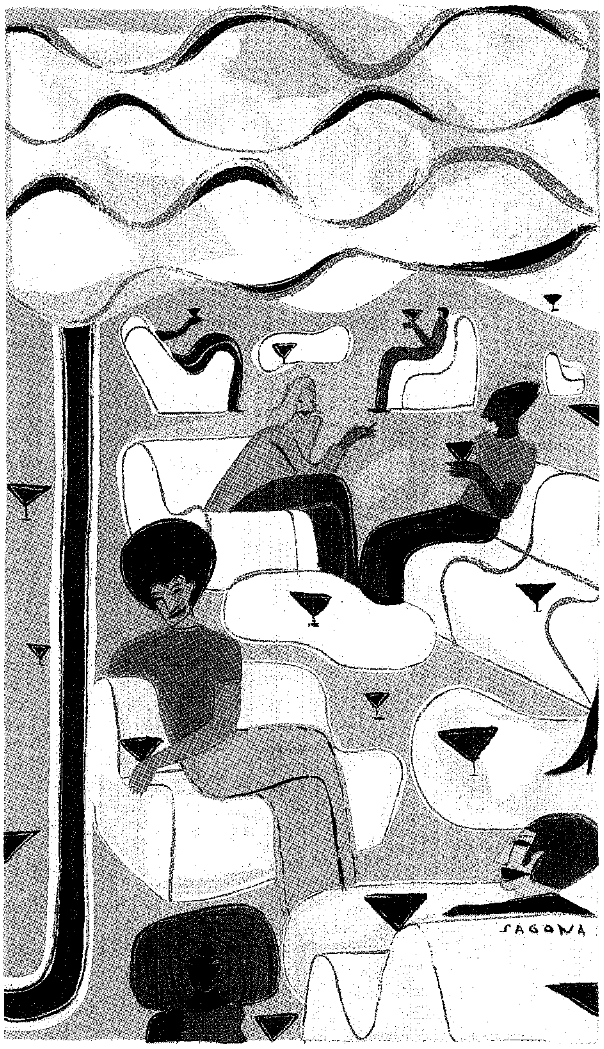
"Food for Thought"—The semiannual dance showcase–cum–food drive features three evenings, curated by choreographers Allyson Green and Mark Haim and by dancer Marya Wethers, respectively. Green's evening is dedicated to works by out-of-town choreographers, Haim has scheduled twenty artists in a series of three-minute slots, and Wethers has chosen works by women of color. For those who donate two cans of food, the admission charge is reduced by half. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 12-14 at 8:30.)

"Urban Tap"—The lanky and superfast tap dancer Herbin (Tamango) Van Cayseele, a native of French Guiana, picked up his chops in the eighties along with Savion Glover and other young lions of tap at Jimmy Slyde's informal dance university at the night club La Cave. Since then, by his own admission, he has had to struggle, dancing on the streets and in East Village bars and clubs. But after a "Riverdance" stint and an *Ebony*-magazine anniversary gig with Gregory Hines, Van Cayseele found himself with the contacts to put together an evening so "all my friends could do their thing." The program fuses capoeira, stilt dancing, hip-hop, d.j. culture, live music, and frequent appearances from the speedy Van Cayseele himself. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 11-13 at 8.)

"I Think I Ken"—The @dance troupe appears in an evening-length work choreographed by Allan Tibbetts about relationships between various plastic characters: Barbie, Ken, G.I. Joe, Skipper, Kira, Carlos, and differently abled Becky. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Nov. 11-14 at 8. Through Nov. 21.)

"A Girl Joan"—Erica Stuart reprises her evening-length solo in the role of Joan of Arc. (HERE. Nov. 10 at 8. Through Nov. 24.)

"Test Traveller/Polar Star"—Peter Rose, the co-founder of P.S. 122, returns to the venue from Berlin, with a picaresque dance matching choreography with tales of travel. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 15 at 7:30.)



MAKINA SAGUNA

Cool nights at the Ice Bar.

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Richard Thompson / Wilco—Many things have doomed this English troubadour to being an acquired taste: from his weedy croon to his knotty guitar work to the dizzying anecdotes he indiscriminately embarks on during performance. But what keeps most people away from Thompson is his masterly gift for pouring salt on open wounds, used most famously on "Shoot Out the Lights," the 1982 chronicle of his divorce from songwriting partner Linda Thompson. His latest, "Mock Tudor," which features his son Teddy on guitar, includes such new gems as the reggae-flavored "Crawl Back Under My Stone," which makes breaking up something to celebrate. / When the acclaimed country-punk group Uncle Tupelo disbanded, singer Jay Farrar went on to form Son Volt, while his former songwriting partner, Jeff Tweedy, gave the world the more charismatic Wilco. Tweedy's songs are less piercing than Farrar's tortured vignettes, but his band has a rare enthusiasm: with slithering fiddles, cranking guitars, and rootsy charm, they turn every gig into a hoedown. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th

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Dear sirs,

When I am lonely I reach for The Macallan and when I have company it's a must.

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Otherwise I seldom touch the stuff except, of course, when I am thirsty!!

Yours, etc.
Campbell MacGregor
(aged 85),
a moderate drinker
of long standing.

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St. 496-7070. Nov. 9-10 at 8. . . . ¶ Wilco also plays at Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St., *840-2824, on Nov. 13 at 8.)*

"SALUTE TO FLIP"—Flip Phillips is famous for his calling-all-dogs high notes and other grandstanding effects perpetrated during the "Jazz at the Philharmonic" concerts of the nineteen-forties and -fifties, but this octogenarian is actually one of the last of the great swing tenor saxophonists, capable of captivating an audience with his deep-blue Ben Webster-style ballads. Among those turning out for this well-deserved tribute are guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Howard Alden, pianist Derek Smith, and drummer Kenny Washington. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. Nov. 11 at 8.)

PRIMUS—Imagine virtuoso musicianship in a head-on collision with dunce-capped punk attitude and you've got the concept behind this cheerfully demented California trio. On its latest album, "Antipop," the group's bassist/lyricist Les Claypool allows his insanity to be tempered by such esteemed guest producers as Limp Bizkit front man Fred Durst and the prodigal punk Tom Waits. With the sonic mayhem of guitarist Buckethead. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Nov. 11 at 8.)

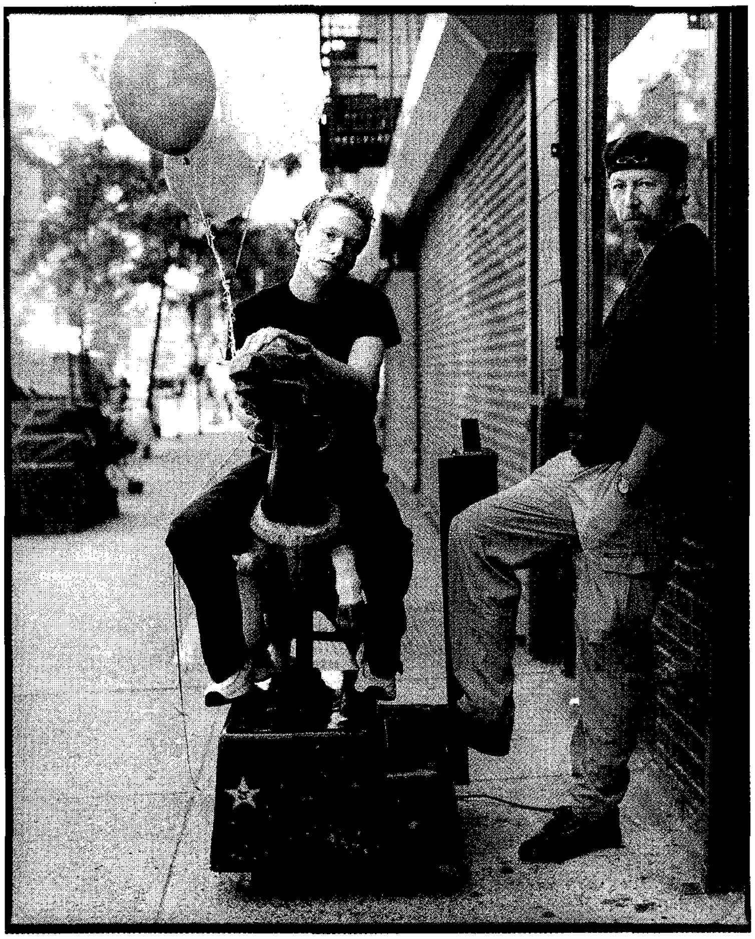
"HARRY SMITH PROJECT"—Producer Hal Willner has gathered an impressive range of musicians, including Nick Cave, Sonic Youth, Lou Reed, Syd Straw, Jeff Tweedy and Jay Bennett, Van Dyke Parks, and DJ Spooky, for a contemporary take on Harry Smith's "Anthology of American Folk Music," the highly influential collection compiled by Smith back in 1952 and reissued two years ago. (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Nov. 11-12 at 8.)

PET SHOP BOYS—Long before electronica, this London duo had found a curiously original sound by mixing the click-clack programming of the Human League with the languid soul of Al Stewart. More than a decade later, the group continues to find inspiration in this fairly limited formula. Live, the Boys embellish with a glitter-and-gold stage show worthy of a permanent run in Vegas. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Nov. 11-12 at 8.)

NEW YORK AUTUMN BLUES FESTIVAL—Mississippi and Chicago blues come to the Upper West Side. Nov. 11 at 8: Howard (Louie Bluie) Armstrong, a ninety-year-old master of the mandolin and violin, joins one of the last of the original acoustic Delta-blues guitarists, David (Honeyboy) Edwards, who's played with Robert Johnson and Big Joe Williams. . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 8: New Orleans pianist Henry Butler. . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: Koko Taylor, whose forte is urban blues, delivered in a big, rumbling alto. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. For more information, call 864-1414.)

MARTIN HAYES AND DENNIS CAHILL—County Clare, Ireland, is both Hayes' birthplace and a source of inspiration for the accomplished fiddler's music, which is as lyrical as a saunter down a country lane. It is most often slow moving, but it occasionally breaks into a brisk run. He's joined by the guitarist Cahill, who, though he's from Chicago, knows the terrain quite well. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. *772-4448. Nov. 13 at 8.)*

BOB DYLAN / PHIL LESH—The wizened poet laureate of popular music, on a double bill with the humble bassist for the Grateful Dead. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Nov. 13 at 7:30.)



Richard Thompson and his son Teddy play the Beacon Theatre.

ROBERT TRACHTENBERG

CHRIS CORNELL—The alternative god best known as the voice of Soundgarden, whose new solo album, "Euphoria Morning," trades in the testosterone guitars of his old grunge act for twelve well-crafted tunes that are downright Beatle-esque. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 14 at 8.)

ALLISON KRAUSS—Joined by her razor-sharp acoustic band, Union Station, whose Swiss-watch timing is a wonder, Krauss is one of country music's greatest pleasures; her voice and her buttery violin playing are things of beauty. (Town Hall. Nov. 16 at 8.)

CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Nov. 12: Back in the late sixties, the celebrated British folk-rock unit **FAIRPORT CONVENTION** hatched the careers of Richard Thompson (see Concerts, above) and Sandy Denny, among others. With founding member Simon Nicol still at the rudder, they sound as rowdy and randy as ever. Nov. 16: Bluegrass guitarist **DEL MC COURY** stops by with his band. With the Austin, Texas, guitarist **CHRIS SMITHER.**

BOWERY BALLROOM, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Nov. 10: The big-country roots rock of Toronto's **BLUE RODEO.** Nov. 14-15: The Italian-and-Japanese avant pop of **BLONDE REDHEAD.** Nov. 16-18: **ME'SHELL NDEGÉOCELLO,** a seventies-channelling dynamo whose songs are always in the key of life: she elegantly fuses R. & B., funk, and pop the way Stevie Wonder used to.

BROWNIES, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Nov. 12: If Hank Williams had been born in Israel, had come of age in the post-punk era, and had hung out with the art-school crowd, he might have turned out a bit like Eef Barzelay, the lanky front man of the quartet **CLEM SNIDE.** With the evolving Continental punk of **BARBEZ.** Nov. 13: **CHAMPALE,** singer-songwriter Mark Rozzo's unusually flexible and inventive ensemble, covers the territory from meditative spaciness to full-bore freakout. It's modern pop that's a bit retro, too, with just enough psychedelia thrown in to make you check your drink.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—Nov. 13: Former Bongos front man **RICHARD BARONE.** The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

ICE BAR, 528 Canal St., at Washington St. (226-2602)—In a far-western downtown nook, where contractors store idle cranes and pile drivers and you're more likely to find a stray dog than an empty taxicab, sits this three-month-old Arctic-inspired outpost. The cozy, all-white interior looks like Superman's Fortress of Solitude redecorated by Austin Powers: billowing white canopies hanging from the ceiling, white-brick walls, amoeba-shaped bathroom mirrors, bowls of roasted white pumpkin seeds, and surprisingly comfortable wavy white banquettes.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 10: **JUNIOR BROWN,** probably the only guitarist who can switch from rapid-fire chicken pickin' to delicate slide work in the course of a single bar. With **ROBERT EARL KEEN,** a singer-songwriter who, like fellow Texans Steve Earle and Jimmie Dale Gilmore, packs a lot of hard-earned wisdom into his disarming tales of life on the road. Nov. 13: **MARTIN SEXTON,** a thirty-two-year-old folk rocker from Syracuse with an oaky voice, a bulging bag of sharp-edged songs, and a well-founded reputation built on great live shows. Nov. 15-16: The skate-punk sounds of **311.**

KNITTING FACTORY, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 12: Singer-songwriter **JEFF BLACK** and **FRIENDS OF DEAN MARTINEZ,** slide guitarist Bill Elm's outfit with the cocktail-lounge name but a mysterious big-sky, back-country sound. Nov. 13-14: **ALEX CHILTON,** the man from Memphis who (as a high-school sophomore) put the gravel into the Box Tops' classic, "The Letter." Over the past three decades, he's been the leader of Big Star, producer for the Cramps, a dishwasher, and the subject of a Replacements song; these days, he seems content to cut records that showcase his sardonic approach to blues, rockabilly, country, and R. & B.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Nov. 12: **ALEX CHILTON** (see the Knitting Factory). With the **SPRAGUE BROTHERS,** two harmonizing siblings from southern California with a hankering for surf-guitar antics and rockabilly. The title of their début album, "Let the Chicks Fall Where They May," says it all. Nov. 16: Call **ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO** the Latin Elvis Costello: his world-weary homilies come packaged in garage-rock cinders, and his voice has more tar than a pack of Marlboros.

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Nov. 15-16: **LEFTOVER SALMON** came out of Colorado in the early nineties; the self-described "polyethnic cajun slamgrass" band devoted itself to the festival circuits and along the way earned itself a major-label deal. Their latest trick is their new album, "The Nashville Sessions," which features contributions from a few of their heros—including Béla Fleck, John Popper, and Lucinda Williams.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Nov. 13: The **SPRAGUE BROTHERS** (see Maxwell's). Nov. 16: The hard-touring Canadian troubadour **FRED EAGLESMITH,** whose songs are poetic reflections on life at the bottom of the economic ladder. One of his favorite songs asks "When exactly did we become white trash?"

Shine, 285 West Broadway. (941-0900)—Nov. 11: The fierce singer **TOSHI REAGON** does celebratory shows of retro-funk, urban blues, and folk, all sung with evangelical fervor.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Nov. 10: Singer **MARTHA REDBONE** may not have a record deal, but she's got pipes, and her mix of soul and funk is polished to a brilliant shine. Nov. 11: **GIL SCOTT-HERON.** In the seventies, while many of his R. & B. peers were blissfully succumbing to disco fever, singer-pianist (and poet-novelist) Scott-Heron was fusing jazz and funk textures with sobering political rap. He's been on tour ever since. Dining.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Nov. 11-13: The **T. S. MONK** sextet. Drummer Monk holds to the dictum "Honor thy father" with a passion. His sturdy repertory ensemble continues to mine new gold from Thelonious Monk's fecund tunes. Dining.

Cornelia Street Café, 29 Cornelia St. (989-9319)—Nov. 13: Boston's best-kept secret is slipping out of the bag as saxophonist **GEORGE GARZONE,** a respected teacher and daredevil improviser, is putting in more frequent local appearances. He's joined here by **MICHAEL MANIERI** on vibraphones.

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 14: The **CHRISTIAN MC BRIDE** quartet. McBride, the most formidable of all young bassists, can also scare the pants off most veterans. He's a crafty traditionalist, who balances his doctrinaire ways with a mischievous leaning toward funk. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Nov. 10-14: The **DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN** quartet. The tenor saxophonist has been carrying the banner of gritty soul-jazz since he was the pride of Ray Charles's classic band of the fifties. His fervent roughhouse tone will be set off by the plush tenor voice of **ANDY BEY.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 11-14: The **JASON MORAN** trio. Pianist Moran belongs to that shifting conglomerate of innovative young players which centers around saxophonist Greg Osby, who, a decade ago, was a smart upstart like his protégés. Nov. 15: **JAMES (BLOOD) ULMER** still blends gnarled blues with free jazz and funk rock, using tunings lost to the ages, and singing with the molasses drawl of a Delta crooner.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through Nov. 14: The **DANILO PEREZ** trio. Pianist Perez is as technically dexterous and harmonically astute as anyone on the scene, and few of his peers have his gift for rhythm. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Nov. 14: Vocalist **MARY STALLINGS,** a veteran of Count Basie's and Billy Eckstine's bands, is backed by **ERIC REED,** the fleet-fingered young pianist who tips his hat to our fair city on his new release, "Manhattan Melodies," and his trio. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Zinc Bar, 90 W. Houston St. (477-8337)—On his recent album of unaccompanied guitar, "Solotude," **RON AFFIF,** who has a regular Monday gig at this intimate space, displayed a controlled and pleasantly muted side to his normally extroverted personality—a good sign for this gifted player whose speed sometimes gets the best of him. Saturdays and Sundays feature Brazilian jazz.

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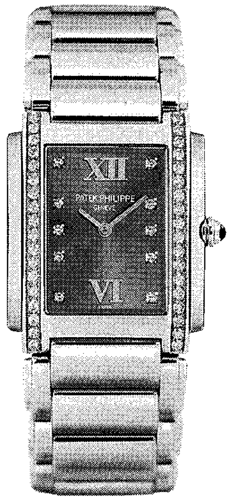

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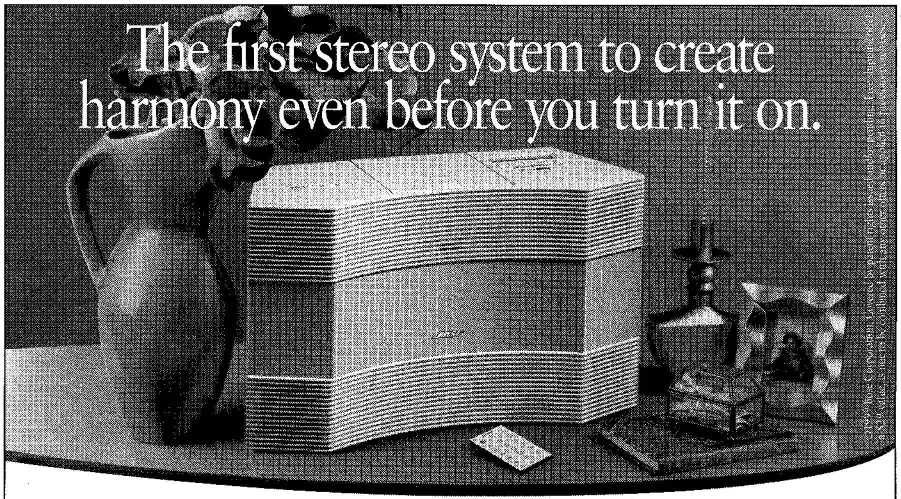
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ART

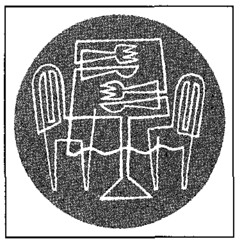
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Portraits by Ingres: Image of an Epoch." Beginning with a gravely pompous image of the Emperor Napoleon (looking disquietingly like the current Mayor of New York), this show surveys the superb French draftsman's greatest works. Ingres himself wouldn't have been happy with it, since he hoped to be remembered principally for his insipid mythological tableaux. With those more troublesome works excluded, however, his genius shines. The small drawn likenesses are miraculously articulate, and in the painted portraits, the artist who famously denigrated the importance of color proves himself the greatest colorist of his age. Through Jan. 2. . . . ¶ A companion to the Ingres show, "Costume and Character in the Age of Ingres" gathers examples of the court fashions popular in the artist's heyday. Through Nov. 21. . . . ¶ "Carleton Watkins: The Art of Perception" presents more than a hundred and twenty-five images by this pioneer of photography, who recorded the vastness of the American West. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids," a sombre and ravishing survey of five hundred years of the millennia of Egyptian dynasties, covers the Old Kingdom (2650-2150 B.C.), the glorious formative period of Pharaonic art when the great pyramids were built and religious statuary rose to a refined naturalism. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Daido Moriyama: Hunter," an exhibition of forty photographs made in postwar Japan. Through Jan. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—MOMA ushers in the new millennium with a seventeen-month-long series of shows, all culled from the museum's permanent collection. "Modern Starts," the first of three installments, celebrates the advent of modernism and is itself divided into three sections. "People," with six sections of its own, opens the onslaught, and "Places" and "Things" follow; the entire extravaganza makes the Ring Cycle seem like a miniseries. This segment, devoted to the representation of the human figure, focusses on the period from 1880 to 1920, largely ignoring the tenets of art history in favor of exhilarating, and occasionally exasperating, pairings. Crowd pleasers abound: an Arp beside a Miró, a Klimt next to a van Gogh, a Toulouse-Lautrec and a Braque, as well as a cavalcade of works by Picasso and Matisse, whose "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" and "The Piano Lesson" hang side by side. In addition to paintings, there are fine examples of sculpture, notably a roomful of bronzes presided over by Rodin's sloping masterpiece, "Monument to Balzac." Photographs are scattered throughout the galleries, but in "Posed and Unposed," a tepid section devoted exclusively to that medium, the show falters. Infrequent fast-forwards to the present day feel like novelty items, such as a 1993 photograph of a swimmer by Reneke Dijkstra paired with Cézanne's "The Bather," painted more than a century earlier. Through Feb. 1. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Francesco Clemente, who first came to international prominence at the 1980 Venice Biennale, rose quickly in an art world bone-tired of Conceptualism's stranglehold on the scene. This was largely owing to his refreshing lack of didacticism, his unabashed use of the painted figure, his old-fashioned artisanal materials, and his energetically romantic imagery. After a move to New York in the eighties, his name was indissolubly linked with the era's other neo-expressionist art stars, from Basquiat to Schnabel. The Guggenheim's museum-wide retrospective unites more than two hundred works in various mediums in an effort to enshrine a polymorphous œuvre that is light and sweet, and, at times, overripe and cloying. The curators, "in keeping with the artist's anti-hierarchical, open-ended spirit," have emphasized eclecticism, but as you ascend the nautilus, and the oils, watercolors, pastels, frescoes, sculptures, and book prints begin to mount up, it's easy to see Clemente's hasty eclecticism solidifying into habit. Through Jan. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

TABLES FOR TWO



Sistina, 1555 Second Ave., at 81st St. (861-7660)—As a term of approval the word "grownup" has become almost obsolete, but no other adjective so precisely captures the charm of this discreet hideaway, which draws the sort of well-heeled people who go out to be nourished rather than seen, heard, or written up on Page Six the following day. For nearly twenty years, on a motley stretch of the Upper East Side now chockablock with a Starbucks, a video shop, and various transitory eateries, Sistina has been turning out dinners devoted to the twin verities of classic Italian cooking—absolutely fresh ingredients and elegant, simple preparation. The chef-owner, Giuseppe Bruno, who has an expressive face out of Caravaggio and hails from a family of innkeepers on the Amalfi Coast, presides over the wood-panelled restaurant with the geniality of an old friend.

At the bar, a glass jar packed with a kaleidoscopic array of vegetables stands as an emblem of refined earthiness. Opposite is a table laden with pedigreed bottles of wine and gleaming desserts—ruby-red tarts, bowls of macerating fruit, a still-life spillage of champagne grapes. The restaurant proper is appointed with well-spaced tables, tasselled Fortuny sconces, faux-naïve gouaches of friendly animals, and white tapers that cast a flattering glow.

The menu has all the old favorites, but with unexpected twists. Among the antipasti, grilled shrimp and scallops turn up in a woody black-truffle sauce; the duck carpaccio is bathed in a warm walnut vinaigrette. Exceptional among the pasta dishes are the goat-cheese ravioli in an artichoke sauce, and the gnocchi topped with gorgonzola and tomatoes. Mr. Bruno thinks like a naturalist, and his sea bass with grilled asparagus and a simple lemon sauce makes for an unusually harmonious ménage à trois.

At this time of year, it may be hard to resist the priciest item on the menu: risotto with white truffles. On a recent night, Mr. Bruno himself did the honors, shaving heady slivers onto pillows of arborio rice with the profligacy of Zeus's arrival as a shower of gold to seduce Danaë. Like everything else at Sistina, the gesture had nothing to do with theatrics and everything to do with simple satisfaction. (Open weekdays for lunch, daily for dinner. Entrees $14 to $25.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Part two of "The American Century" is a vast improvement over its predecessor, and not just because American art gathered momentum after the Second World War. The exhibition design as a whole is clearer: film clips and "historical" displays have been segregated to small side rooms, so they don't compete directly with the nearly seven hundred art works. On the upper floors, curator Lisa Phillips succeeds in making the familiar stories of Minimalism and Abstract Expressionism feel almost new. Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

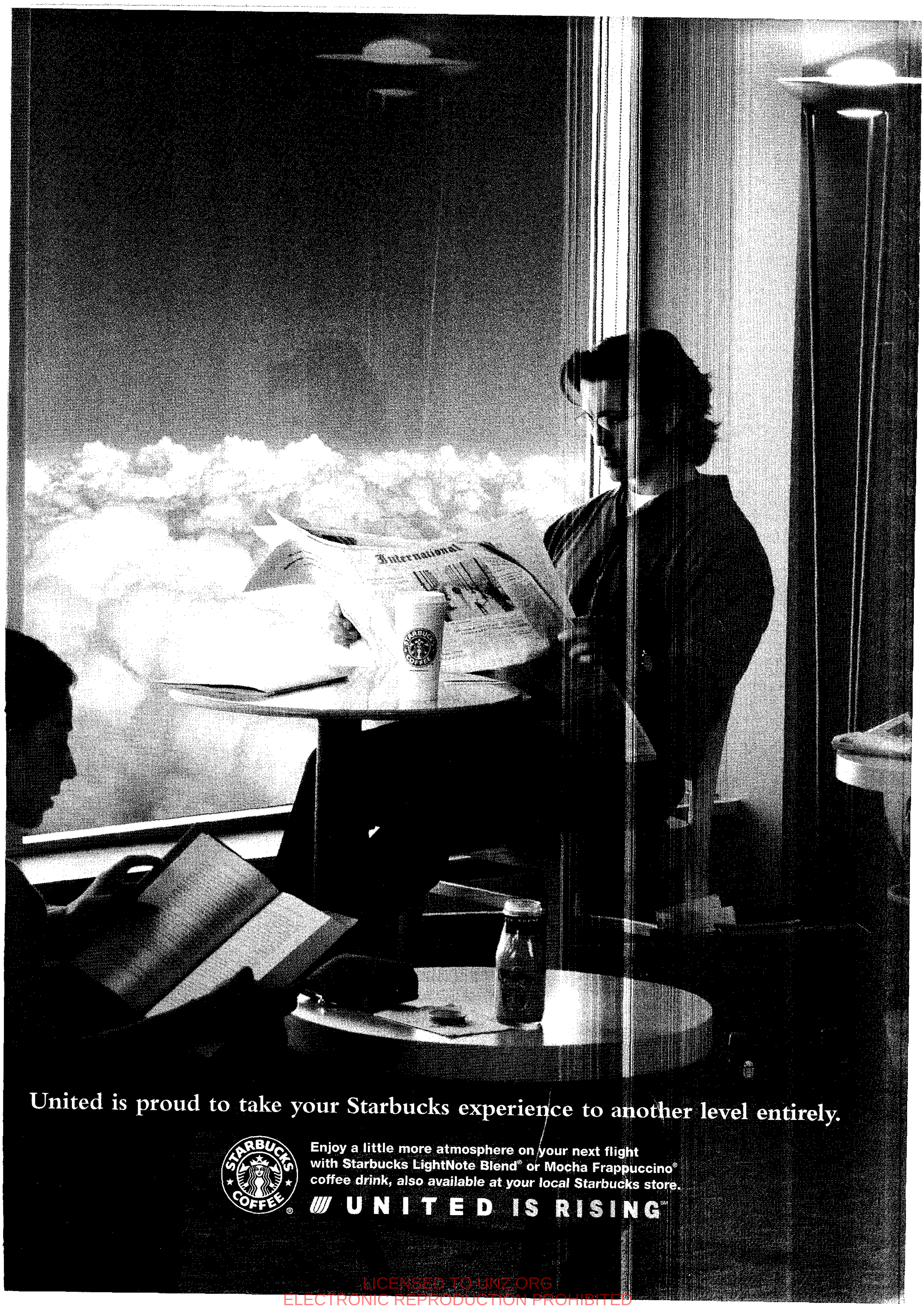
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Eastman Johnson: Painting America" offers seventy-two canvases by the nineteenth-century sensation, including portraits of Emerson, Hawthorne, and Longfellow, and a series focussing on the Ojibwa people, painted while the artist was travelling on the Wisconsin frontier. Through Feb. 6. . . . ¶ "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection." Reinvigorated by controversy, this sampling of advertising mogul Charles Saatchi's private collection looks energetic and diverse. Most of the forty artists project a jaunty cynicism, aiming for a quick, marketable impact, but only a handful of the works are truly impressive. "Ghost," Rachel Whiteread's plaster cast of the inside of a living room, is the sombre pinnacle of the exhibition. Jenny Saville's gloriously obese painted self-portraits and Ron Mueck's leaner sculptural ones are exceptional in part for their relatively traditional (keep it quiet) virtuosity. And then there's Damien Hirst, whose dead animals in tanks seem almost quaintly existentialist. Through Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. (217-5800)—"Unmistakably Mackie." Too much is not enough for the lavish Bob Mackie, as this thirty-year retrospective makes crystal (not to mention bugle-bead, sequin, and rhinestone) clear. More than a hundred and twenty-five costumes are on display, fashioned for stars ranging from the designer's early muse Mitzi Gaynor and the Supreme Diana Ross to the doll Barbie ("Mackie's greatest model since Cher," according to a museum pamphlet). She who believes in life after love (that's Cher, for those of you who didn't turn on the radio this summer) gets her own mini-retrospective, replete with video clips. The back gallery includes delightful paper dolls Mackie made as a child, but the real showstopper is a videomontage of the costumes in action. Try as you might to maintain ironic distance, just one glimpse of Cher, Bette Midler, and Elton John in seventies regalia belting out "Never Can Say Goodbye" will fill you with glee. Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, noon to 8; Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Balthus—Timed to coincide with the publication of a new biography, this rare exhibit of the artist's work offers more than two dozen delicate, Cézanne-flavored drawings, supplemented by a few paintings. As always, Balthus's art is full of style and guile. In a pencil self-portrait from 1943, he portrays himself as a slender youth with a calm, sweet-tempered smile. A few years later, in an ink study for the notorious "Guitar Lesson," he leans hungrily over the naked pelvis of a nymphet, as though torn between pedophilia and cannibalism. A modest show, but a welcome reminder of the artist's ever-so-calculated audacity. Through Nov. 13. (Beadleston, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 581-7544.)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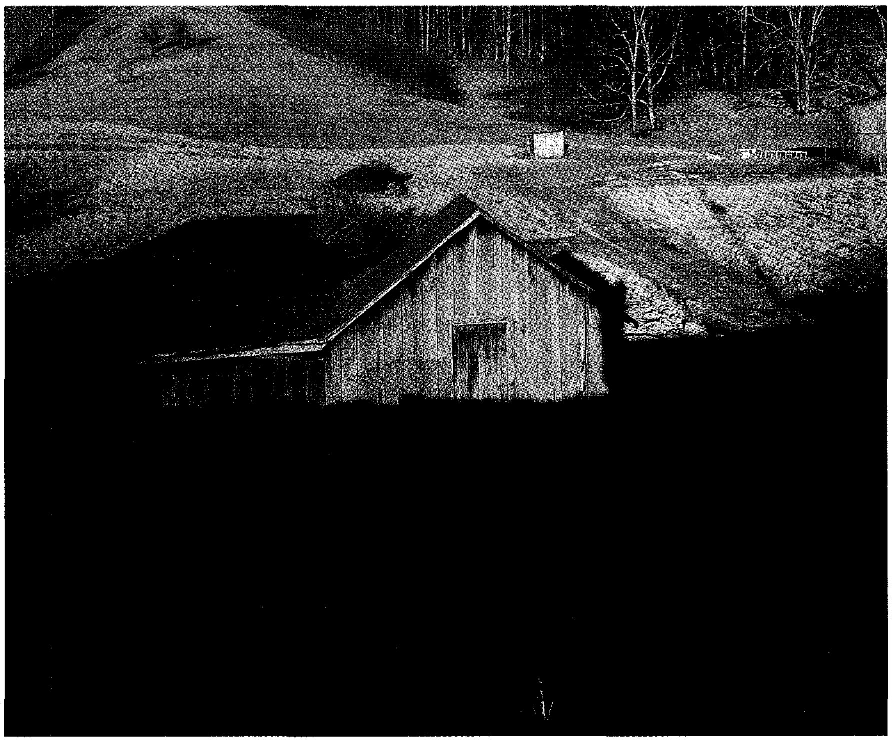


"Carter County, TN" (1996), by Mike Smith, at Richardson (see Photography).

Paul Cézanne (1839-1906)—A thrilling display of nearly fifty watercolors, ranging from decisive early efforts to late, more tentative still-lifes and landscapes. With plenty of untouched areas of white paper, these later works are among Cézanne's most economical and quasi-abstract. For the historically minded, they shine with intimations of subsequent art: Delaunay, Braque, Bonnard, Mondrian. It's best, however, to enjoy these airy apparitions on their own idiosyncratic terms. Through Nov. 24. (Acquavella, 18 E. 79th St. 734-6300. Open Mondays.)

Giulio Romano (1499-1546)—An exhibition of drawings and prints by the sixteenth-century painter, designer, architect, and pornographer—a Renaissance man indeed. Mostly studies for frescoes and architectural decorations, the drawings here include some delightfully vigorous ink sketches, teeming with wrestling satyrs, angels, and animals. Also on view are three pages from "I Modi" ("The Positions"), Romano's album of lascivious prints. Pope Clement VII tried to have all available copies destroyed, which may explain what Shakespeare meant when, in his sole reference to a Renaissance artist, he called Romano "that rare Italian master." Through Nov. 27. (Leubsdorf Gallery, Hunter College, Lexington Ave. at 68th St. 772-4991. Open daily, except Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Short List—**MILTON AVERY,** Lubin House, 11 E. 61st St. 826-0320. Through Nov. 20. . . . **LEE BONTECOU,** Castelli, 59 E. 79th St. 249-4470. Through Nov. 24. . . . **MORRIS LOUIS,** Ameringer Howard, 41 E. 57th St. 935-1110. Through Dec. 4. . . . **PAUL MANES,** Kouros, 23 E. 73rd St. 288-5888. Through Nov. 13. . . . **DAVID MANN,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through Nov. 13. . . . **TREVOR WINKFIELD,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through Nov. 13. . . . **JOHN WONNACOTT,** Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. 535-8810. Through Nov. 20. . . . **MARK WORKMAN** and **BILLY SULLIVAN,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Both shows through Nov. 13.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Mona Hatoum—An elegant installation of austere sculpture that's a ménage à trois of minimalism, surrealism, and feminism. Discomfort and danger lurk in every domestically scaled object on view, from an area rug made of straight pins to "Dormeuse," a chaise longue of steel-tread plate. Through Dec. 4. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474.)

Nicky Hoberman—In the wake of the "Sensation" show it seems that half of the galleries in New York are showing work by young British artists. Feigen jumps on the bandwagon with the first New York show of this South African-born, London-based artist. Hoberman is a deft painter, to say the least, and her colorful, large-scale portraits of very young girls and little old ladies are technically impressive. The figures, based on Polaroids, are distorted, with outsized heads and limbs that defy anatomical reality as they float against vivid monochrome or duotone backgrounds. The images look digitally manipulated (although they're not), and Hoberman exploits the effect with a surface so flat it could be the work of computerized ink-jets or an airbrush (it isn't). But the over-all effect is coy and slightly annoying, like the old-timer winking in "Be-Bop." Through Nov. 27. (Feigen, 353 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

David Reed—After years of trying to make painting "reflect our current environment," David Reed finally settled on a look inspired primarily by film. Long, screenlike canvases and painterly paeans to Hitchcock followed. In his latest exhibition, Reed plays with the boundaries of his signature alkyd-and-oil abstractions. The canvases, trimmed back to a more manageable length, sing with expansive applications of his characteristic reellike forms. Reed presents certain controlled experiments in form: in two paintings, flat-as-pancake bubbles swim in a polished turquoise sea; a third picture features exuberant washes of pale-pink effluvia. As polished and virtuosic as his earlier canvases, these paintings appear to be a new avenue for Reed's explorations. Through Nov. 27. (Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999.)

John Wesley—"Irish Paintings." New works by a highly original artist whose pared-down technique—flat figures, outlined in black and painted in a matte palette dominated by confectionery pinks and blues—hasn't wavered in thirty-six years. The style is a cross between the Sunday funnies—Dagwood Bumstead is a frequent subject—and ukiyo-e woodcuts (the Japanese term translates as "floating world," which could serve as the title of his entire œuvre). The eight canvases installed here, which the New York-based artist painted in Ireland over the past year, range from "Pacific," featuring a pair of petulant Asian women, their pink flesh punctuated by red lips, nails, and nipples, to "Wow! Whoops! Oh Boy!," in which a goofy bird flails in midair above a Hokusai wave. They're baffling delights. Through Dec. 4. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

Short List—**JOHN CURRIN,** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Nov. 27. . . . **CARROLL DUNHAM,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Dec. 4. . . . **PHIL FROST,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through Nov. 13. . . . **RODNEY GRAHAM,** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 462-2668. Through Nov. 30. . . . **JACQUELINE HUMPHRIES,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through Nov. 27. . . . **SOL LE WITT,** Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Dec. 4. . . . **CHRISTINA MACKIE,** AC Project Room, 453 W. 17th St. 645-4970. Through Nov. 24. . . . **JASON MIDDLEBROOK,** Martz, 529 W. 20th St. 206-3686. Through Nov. 13. . . . **CHRIS OFILI,** Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St. 627-5258. Through Nov. 13. . . . **PETER SARKISIAN,** I-20, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100. Through Nov. 20.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Richard Artschwager—New works by this enigmatic artist. The focal point is a suite of landscapes on celotex, a dense, fibrous paper that is Artschwager's signature material. In the past, he has usually painted banal quasi-photographic scenes, relying on the material's whorled, irregular surface to give the images a portentous ambiguity. That's still the case, and a couple of these pictures, notably an image of a Ryderesque tornado forming over a plateau and an S.U.V. travelling through a nocturnal meadow, have an evasive charm. Through Dec. 18. (Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.)

Beth B—In a recent show, the artist presented a series of intimate photographs of women, or more particularly, of their labia, and turned what could have been a rather bald gesture of provocation into a bouquet of O'Keeffeian individuality for the piercing era. In her current outing, B works in the same here-you-have-it style on an entirely different scale: she has created a pair of ten-foot fibreglass casts of the torsos of two women, literal breastplates that have an almost martial perkiness. The results are complex—at once comic, primitive, and monumental. Through Nov. 13. (Visionaire, 11 Mercer St. 274-8959.)

Gino Rubert—Paintings, drawings, watercolors, etchings, photographs, and three excellent videos by a young Catalan with a dark literary sensibility. Rubert's surrealistic domestic scenes feature towering molls, short fellows in suits, and oppressively solid houses. Heightening the air of mystery are unexpected collage elements, among them Formica and fake wood, seamlessly incorporated into the canvases. One lady, dressed to kill and sporting a peg leg, wears real velour; in another painting, a noirish group poses stiffly on a terrace made out of cork. In one of the videos—originally presented at an exhibition devoted to Freud—a cross-dressing Rubert discourses on power while draped over a grand piano. Through Nov. 14. (Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863.)

Short List—**ALFRED JENSEN,** Malca, 580 Broadway. 966-8854. Through Jan. 8. . . . **JERRY KEARNS** and **COR DERA,** P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642. Both shows through Nov. 13. . . . **KIKI LAMERS,** CRG, 93 Grand St. 966-4360. Through Nov. 13. . . . **HUNG LIU,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Nov. 20. . . . **GORDON MATTA-CLARK,** Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Dec. 24. . . . **YOSHITOMO NARA,** Boesky, 51 Greene St. 941-9888. Through Nov. 20. . . . **NICOLA TYSON,**

Petzel, 26 Wooster St. 334-9466. Through Nov. 13. . . . **HANNAH WILKE**, Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232. Through Nov. 13.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

SIMON LEE—A show of artifacts once abandoned in a storage locker and now brought back to life. By floating the lot of them down the East River and photographing the event, Lee devised a lyrical history for homeless things. They hang from the ceiling, rotating slowly in the light of the projected photographs. The resulting ghostly interplay of shadows on the walls invokes Plato's parable of the cave. Through Nov. 15. (Pierogi, 177 N. 9th St. 718-599-2144. Open Fridays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

CREST HARDWARE SHOW—Put together by artist and art personality Gene Pool, this inventive, erratic show of works by a hundred and twenty artists celebrates the Williamsburg hardware store's fifth year as a showcase for art as product and product as art. It features the work of mostly unknown artists together with that of a few better-knowns. There are William Graef's quart containers of "Ethnic Mix Cultural Paint"; Richard Humann's "Humann Sandpaper," bearing the artist's smiling image; Randy Brozen's moss-covered hammers; and A. M. Sekeres's "War Relics," artifacts from the mayor's campaign against the Brooklyn Museum (including a lock of hair from that institution's curator of contemporary art). Just finding the art among the nails and caulk guns is great fun. Through Nov. 20. (Crest Hardware, 558 Metropolitan Ave., between Union Ave. and Lorimer St. 718-388-9521. Open daily, except Sundays, 8 to 6.)

"SIZE MATTERS"—The walls of this twenty-thousand-square-foot gallery are jam-packed with two-foot-square works by four hundred artists, and some of the salon-like groupings manage to cohere. In one grid, flowers and amoebae seem to pulse in unity, while on another wall, whose theme seems to be wild things, a cartoony hairy behind bumps up against a literally furry canvas. Some artists did sneaky things within the size restriction to stand out, extending bubbles and braids into the gallery or, as Maureen Connor did, installing shelves and a video monitor. Andy Friedman's square is a precisely lettered album cover, whose cheeky title seems to speak for the show: "I'll Have It All, Momma." Through Dec. 11. (Gale Gates, 37 Main St., Dumbo. 718-522-4596. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

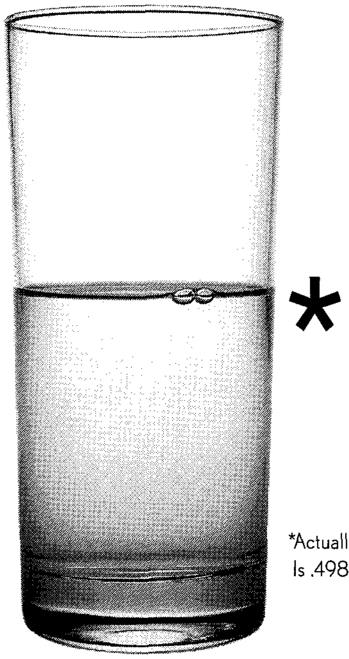
SOTHEBY'S—Nov. 10-11: Impressionist and modern art, including two oils by Monet, a large bronze by Degas, and, on the opening night, forty-six pieces consigned by the owners of the Saidenberg Gallery, who represented Picasso in this country for nearly twenty years. . . . ¶ Nov. 12: French and Continental furniture, carpets, and decorative pieces. . . . ¶ Nov. 15: Stamps. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S—Nov. 10: The conclusion of a sale of twentieth-century art. . . . ¶ Nov. 16-17: Contemporary art. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.) . . . At **CHRISTIE'S EAST**: Nov. 13: An auction of wine. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

PHILLIPS—A small sale of contemporary art, with notable works by Anselm Kiefer and Sigmar Polke. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. Nov. 16.)

MODERNISM—Seventy-eight dealers with examples of Art Nouveau, Wiener Werkstätte, Bauhaus, and other modernist schools. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Nov. 11-14, with a benefit preview on Nov. 10. For information, call 777-5218.)

TRIPLE PIER EXPO—More than six hundred antiques dealers gather for the first of two weekends. (Piers 88, 90, and 92, Twelfth Ave. between 48th and 52nd Sts. Nov. 13-14. For information, call 255-0020.)



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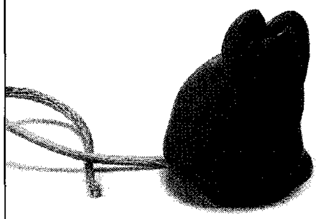

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Mike Smith / Mark Steinmetz—"You Aren't from Around Here," a group of assured and often remarkable color landscapes and portraits made in the artist's adopted home territory of eastern Tennessee. The compositions can be quite complex: in an image of a high-sloping pasture bisected by a fence, one side is green and dotted with cows, the other is burnt yellow and home to a telephone pole, an access road, and a stop sign. But Smith can also be deceptively simple, as in a view of a private, snow-dusted hollow out behind a barn./A handful of black-and-white photographs taken at night in the suburban South. Both shows through Nov. 20. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"Walker Evans at *Fortune*"—Works made during Evans's twenty years (1945-65) as staff photographer and photo editor at *Fortune*. Through Dec. 4. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

Short List—**MICHAEL ACKERMAN,** Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 7; through Nov. 30. . . . **GWEN AKIN AND ALLAN LUDWIG,** Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Through Nov. 20. . . . **TOM BARIL,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Dec. 11. . . . **OLIVER BOBERG,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Nov. 27. . . . **MASAHISA FUKASE,** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600. Through Dec. 11. . . . **PAUL HIMMEL** and **ERWIN BLUMENFELD,** Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300. Both shows through Nov. 27. . . . **CONNIE IMBODEN,** Alan Klotz/Photocollect, 22 E. 72nd St. 327-2211. Closed Tuesdays; through Dec. 4. . . . **BILL OWENS,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Dec. 4. . . . **MAN RAY** and **FREDERICK SOMMER,** Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through Nov. 27.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330; and for the Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St., 570-3949.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Joyce Guyer, Ruxandra Donose, John Fanning, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; conducted by Edo de Waart. (Nov. 10 at 8.) . . . With Dwayne Croft instead of Mr. Fanning. (Nov. 13 at 8.) . . . **TOSCA,** with Eva Marton, Kristján Jóhannsson, and Juan Pons; Daniel Oren. (Nov. 11 and Nov. 15 at 8.) . . . Boito's **MEFISTOFELE,** with Veronica Villarroel, Richard Leech, and Samuel Ramey; Mark Elder. (Nov. 12 at 8.) . . . **AIDA,** with Norma Fantini, Dolora Zajick, Michael Sylvester, and Simon Estes; Paul Nadler. (Nov. 13 at 1.) . . . With Sharon Sweet, Ms. Zajick, Richard Margison, and Mr. Estes; Mr. Nadler. (Nov. 16 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

New York City Opera—Nov. 10 at 7:30 and Nov. 14 at 1:30: "The Abduction from the Seraglio," sung in English. . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 7:30: "Falstaff." . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 7:30: "Central Park," a trilogy of one-act operas by Deborah Drattell, Michael Torke, and Robert Beaser. . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 1:30: "La Bohème." . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: "Carmen." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Opera Orchestra of New York—Presenting a concert performance of Donizetti's "Adelia," composed in 1841 for a production in Rome. It's a serious bel-canto opera with a happy ending—a practically unheard-of combination—but it didn't start out that way. The plot originally called for the heroine to plunge to her death from a balcony, but the Roman censors forbade the representation of suicide onstage. Rather than figure out how else to finish off the soprano, Donizetti simply rewrote the ending and benefitted from still having his title character around to join in the finale. Soprano Mariella Devia leads the cast, and Eve Queler conducts. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 11 at 8.)

Les Arts Florissants—At Alice Tully Hall, William Christie directs his early-music ensemble in semi-staged, choreographed productions of seventeenth-century stage works. Nov. 12 at 8: Purcell's last large-scale theatre piece, "King Arthur." . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 8: Lully's *comédie-ballet* "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme."

Teatro Grattacielo—Presenting a concert performance of Cilea's "L'Arlesiana," with Fiora Contino conducting. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 15 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts premières of five of the six new works the orchestra has commissioned through its "Messages for the Millennium" program, for which composers of disparate persuasions have written pieces that in some way or another allude to the timeless aspirations of humanity. These concerts introduce Thomas Adès's "America (A Prophecy)" (featuring mezzo-soprano Beth Clayton), John Corigliano's "Vocalise" (with soprano Sylvia McNair), Kaija Saariaho's "Oltra Mar" (with the Westminster Symphonic Choir), Somei Satoh's "Kisetsu," and Hans Werner Henze's "Fraternité." (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Nov. 11-13 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 7:30. . . . **NOTE:** The last of the six new pieces, by Giya Kancheli, will be presented in next week's programs.)

Clarion Music Society—Victor Coelho leads a re-creation of the musical festivities for the marriage, in 1608, of the Medici Prince Cosimo II to Princess Maria Maddalena of Austria, including pieces by Francesco Caccini and Girolamo Frescobaldi, among others. (Lang Recital Hall, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 10 at 7.)

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra—Mariss Jansons conducts Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 and Brahms's Symphony No. 1. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

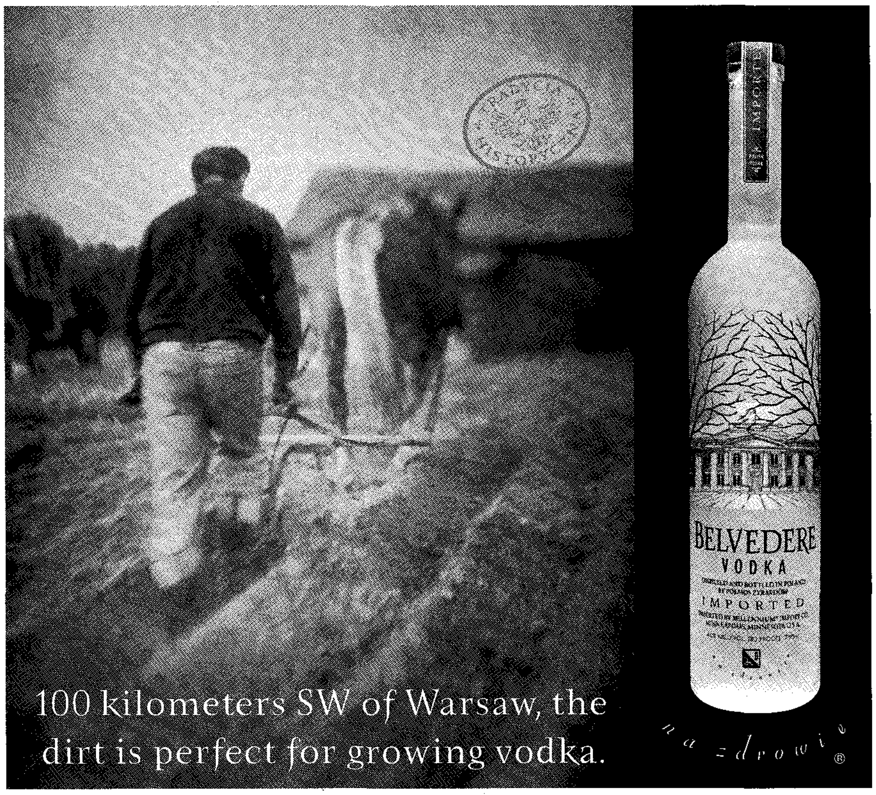
Juilliard Symphony—Otto-Werner Mueller conducts Mendelssohn's "Hebrides Overture" and E-Minor Violin Concerto (featuring Liviu Prunaru), as well as Brahms's Symphony No. 1. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 10 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Jupiter Symphony—Jens Nygaard conducting. Nov. 11 at 2 and 7: An all-Mozart program that includes his F-Major Piano Concerto (K. 459), featuring Enrique Graf. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.) . . . ¶ Nov. 14 at 4: Meyerbeer's "Schiller Centennial March," Benedetto Marcello's Oboe Concerto in C Minor (with Gerard Reuter), Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, and Liszt's A-Major Piano Concerto (with William Wolfram). (Temple Emanu-El, 1 E. 65th St. No tickets necessary.)

Artek—Gwendolyn Toth directs the singers and period-instrument players in Monteverdi's masquelike stage work "Ballo delle Ingrate," in addition to a selection of madrigals, including the concerted works "Tirsi e Clori" and "Con Che Soavità." (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Nov. 11 at 8. . . . ¶ St. James Cathedral, Jay St. at Cathedral Pl., Brooklyn. Nov. 13 at 8. For information about tickets for either performance, call 212-873-0473.)

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie—This chamber orchestra from Bremen, conducted by Daniel Harding, performs Berg's "Lyric Suite," Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Emanuel Ax), and Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 12 at 8.)

Manhattan School of Music Symphony—Glen Barton Cortese leads Mahler's Symphony No. 9. (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 870-6784. Nov. 12 at 8 and Nov. 14 at 3.)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Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp leads John Adams's "Shaker Loops," Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 1 (featuring Frederic Chiu), and Mozart's "Serenata Notturna," in a concert that also includes Saint-Saëns's Septet for Trumpet, Piano, and Strings. (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 13 at 7.)

Polish Festival Orchestra—The pianist Krystian Zimerman organized this ensemble expressly to accompany him on a thirty-nine-city world tour during which he leads both of Chopin's piano concertos from the keyboard. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 13 at 8.)

City Island Baroque Ensemble—Presenting Bach's Cantatas No. 202 ("Weichet nur," with soprano Chen Reiss) and No. 211 (the "Coffee" Cantata). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Nov. 14 at noon.)

Richard Tucker Gala—The annual ariafest for the opera crowd, which this year includes performances by soprano Angela Gheorghiu, mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschlager, and tenor Roberto Alagna. (Avery Fisher Hall. Nov. 14 at 6. For information about tickets, call 757-2218.)

Gulbenkian Choir—Though it is well known to the record-buying public, this Lisbon-based chorus is only now making its first New York appearance. Michel Corboz directs the group in works by several Portuguese composers (including Diogo Dias Melgaz and Joly Braga Santos), in addition to pieces by Poulenc, Ravel, and others. (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Collegiate Chorale—Robert Bass directs Bach's B-Minor Mass, with soprano Marvis Martin, mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, tenor Gregory Cross, bass Kevin Deas, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's. (Carnegie Hall. Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

Sylvan Winds—Presenting wind-oriented solo sonatas and trio sonatas from the court of Frederick the Great, by Johann Joachim Quantz, C. P. E. Bach, J. S. Bach, and the King himself. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Nov. 10 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 904-1422, ext. 13.)

Sonic Boom Festival—New York's annual fall contemporary-music festival continues as the ModernWorks! ensemble offers works for unusual sonic combinations: Lee Hyla's "Howl" (with a tape of Allen Ginsberg reciting his poem integrated into a string quartet), Kaija Saariaho's "Neiges" (for eight cellos), Sofia Gubaidulina's "Silenzio" (for violin, cello, and accordion), and Peter Sculthorpe's "From Ubirr" (for string quartet and didgeridoo). (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Nov. 10 at 8. For information about tickets, call 279-4200.)

Guild of Composers—The ensemble opens its twenty-fifth season with a wide-ranging evening of twentieth-century music comprising Arthur Berger's Partita for Piano, Seymour Shifrin's Sonata for Cello and Piano, Milton Babbitt's "None But the Lonely Flute," Mario Davidovsky's "Synchronism No. 6," Daniel Plante's "Variations for Piano: Études No. 1 and No. 7" (a première), Bartók's String Quartet No. 3, Maurice Delage's "Quatre Poèmes Hindous," and Ravel's "Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé." (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 10 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Beethoven's D-Major String Trio and piano trios by Shostakovich (in E Minor) and Mendelssohn (in D Minor) are played by violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Caroline Wolff, cellist Colin Carr, and pianist Julian Jacobson. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Nov. 11 at 7:30 and Nov. 14 at 4.)

Sequitur—Presenting four twentieth-century chamber works for mixed ensembles: Harbison's "Due Libri di Motetti di Montale," Mauricio Kagel's "Pan" (for piccolo and string quartet), Eric Zivian's "Music, When Soft Voices Die," and Schoenberg's "Ode to Napoleon." (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 11 at 8.)

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Joan Morris and William Bolcom—The inimitable wife-and-husband duo (she's a mezzo-soprano, he's a pianist) offers popular songs from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, by Berlin, Gershwin, Kern, and others. (Metropolitan Museum. Nov. 12 at 8.)

New York's Ensemble for Early Music—The group turns its attention to historical and musical happenings of a half-millennium ago, in a program of pieces that were published, in 1501, in Ottavio Petrucci's "Harmonia Musices Odhecaton," the first printed collection of music. (St. James Chapel, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 280-0330. Nov. 12-13 at 8 and Nov. 14 at 3.)

Food for the Ear—In "Feeding Frenzy," a performance piece by composer Fast Forward which promises to exhibit good taste, four musicians join four chefs and four waiters to collaborate on preparing and delivering dishes for the audience, with everyone's sounds amplified and combined to create a sonic landscape. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Nov. 12-13 at 10.)

Rebecca Pechefsky and Dominic Eckersley—Performing an afternoon of French Baroque music that comprises solo harpsichord suites by Jacques Champion de Chambonnières and François d'Agincour, in addition to sumptuous works for two harpsichords by Jean-François D'Andrieu and Gaspard Le Roux. (Morris-Jumel Mansion, 65 Jumel Terrace, between 160th and 162nd Sts. 923-8008. Nov. 13 at 1.)

Trombone Day—On Nov. 14, aficionados of the instrument will gather, beginning at 10 A.M., for a daylong trombonefest that culminates in an evening concert, at 7:30, which includes the premières of pieces by Franz Hackl and James Pugh. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. For information, call 580-0210, ext. 336.)

Susanne Mentzer—The mezzo-soprano is assisted by pianist Craig Rutenberg in songs by Strauss, Berg (his "Sieben Frühe Lieder"), Poulenc (including the "Quatre Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire"), and Satie. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 14 at 2.)

James David Christie—In 1979, a year after he was named organist of the Boston Symphony, Mr. Christie became the first American to win first prize in the prestigious International Organ Competition in Bruges, Belgium. In this recital, he plays works by Buxtehude, Bach (his Toccata and Fugue in D Minor), Vivaldi, and Sweelinck, among other Baroque composers. (LeFrak Concert Hall, Queens College, Flushing, Queens. 718-793-8080. Nov. 14 at 3.)

Terwilliger-Cooperstock Duo—All of Copland's compositions for violin and piano are performed by violinist William Terwilliger and pianist Andrew Cooperstock. (Merkin Concert Hall. Nov. 14 at 3.)

The Clerks' Group—This English vocal sextet has gained widespread acclaim for its recordings, on the ASV label, of the complete sacred music of the fifteenth-century Flemish composer Johannes Ockeghem. For its New York début recital, the group has created a hybrid Ordinary out of movements from various of that composer's Masses and has interspersed other sacred pieces by Ockeghem, Josquin des Prés, and Robert Morton. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Nov. 14 at 4.)

The King's Noyse—The violin band was one of the most popular instrumental aggregations of Shakespeare's England, and the leading English composers of the time created original pieces and arrangements for its rich timbre of violin, two violas, and bass violin. In this recital, the King's Noyse, which reigns as the leading proponent of this repertoire, performs dances, song arrangements, and other late-Renaissance works by Byrd, Dowland, William Brade, Anthony Holborne, and other luminaries of that period. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Nov. 14 at 5.)

"PoulencPlus!"—The centennial festival continues with a very full program comprising eight of the composer's chamber works that spotlight wind instruments: his Sextet for Piano and Wind Quintet; Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano; Flute Sonata and Villanelle for Piccolo (both with Tara Helen O'Connor); Oboe Sonata (with Joseph Robinson); Clarinet Sonata (with Todd Palmer); Élégie for Horn (with Eric Ruske); and Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon (with Mr. Palmer and Frank Morelli). Charles Wadsworth serves as pianist throughout. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. Nov. 14 at 7. For information about tickets, call 866-4096.)

United States Army Chamber Ensemble—Who knew? In this concert, the musicians perform Beethoven's F-Minor Quartet (Op. 95, played by the Liberty String Quartet), Mozart's A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 414, in the composer-sanctioned reduced orchestration, here featuring pianist Joseph Holt), and vocal works by Brahms and Copland. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. 289-4100. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Music by Jonathan Harvey—Ensemble 21 and a group associated with Paris's IRCAM center perform five pieces by the English composer. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Nov. 15 at 8.)

Musica Antiqua Köln—The Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter joins violinist Reinhard Goebel's nine-member period-instrument ensemble in a program of dramatic cantatas and scenas by Monteverdi, Purcell, and Vivaldi, among others. (Alice Tully Hall. Nov. 16 at 8.)

Four Nations Ensemble—The period-instrument group presents an all-Haydn concert, with soprano Ann Monoyios and tenor Nils Brown. (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between Second and Third Aves. Nov. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 718-622-3695.)

Rafal Kwiatkowski—In his New York début recital, the Polish cellist, assisted by pianist Albert Tiu, performs sonatas by François Francoeur, Chopin, and Barber, in addition to Falla's "Suite Populaire Espagnole." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. Nov. 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 307-6655.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

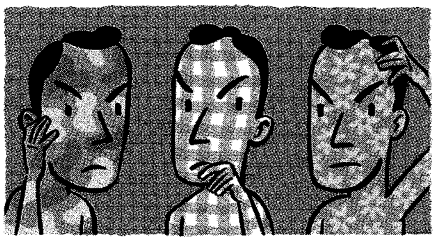
"The Asbury Short Film Show of New York"—These days, when it seems as if every small town has its own film festival, it's difficult for devoted *cinéastes* to keep abreast of all the new independent films. Television-commercial producer Doug LeClaire, with the help of two friends, has come up with a solution: a one-day screening of grand-prize winners and audience favorites from festivals around the country. Among the scheduled program of fourteen shorts is "12 Stops on the Road to Nowhere," which won the Best Comedy Award at the Aspen Shorts Festival, and "More," Mark Osbourne's Academy Award-nominated claymation short, which received this year's Grand Jury Prize in animation at Sundance. (Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St. For more information, call 718-832-7848. Nov. 11 at 8.)

Readings—Nov. 10 at 6:30: By poets Hettie Jones and Thomas Lux. (Flatlands Branch Library, 2065 Flatbush Ave., at Avenue P, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 10 at 7:30: By writers Thane Rosenbaum and Rachel Kadish, from their work. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Nov. 10 at 8: By poets Kenneth Koch and Jordan Davis. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—Nov. 12 at 6:30: Biographer Edmund White discusses the life of Marcel Proust. (Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. 685-0008, ext. 347.) . . . ¶ Nov. 13 at 7: Robert Stone, Judith Thurman, Phyllis Rose, and other writers discuss Philip Roth's novel "Portnoy's Complaint." (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Color Lines



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

It's not every day that Ku Klux Klan members show themselves—let alone their faces—in the ethnic kaleidoscope that is Manhattan, but the public outrage they recently aroused is a good index of how deep America's racial fault lines run. The image of a hooded Klansman wielding a whip is featured on the cover of S. T. Joshi's **Documents of American Prejudice** (Basic), an anthology of racist and anti-racist writings from the Colonial period to the O.J. trial. In one of its most disturbing excerpts, from the influential 1905 novel "The Clansman," by Thomas Dixon, Jr., the shrouded horsemen, as they prepare to lynch a black man, are compared to "the Knights of the Middle Ages . . . on their Holy Crusades."

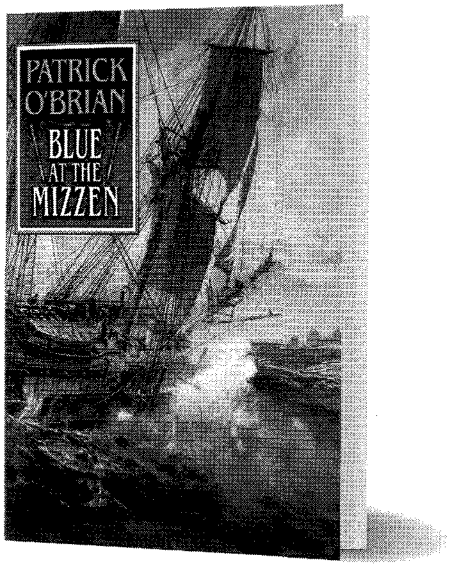
Thomas Jefferson's problematic views on slavery have long been discussed, and have been contrasted with his admiration for Native Americans. But Jeffersonians will likely be dismayed by Anthony F. C. Wallace's new book, **Jefferson and the Indians** (Harvard), which shows how his romantic fascination with Native American cultures, traditions, and languages went hand in hand with energetic designs to resettle their lands, his firm belief that settlers would eventually "cover the whole northern, if not southern continent," and his determination that there should not be "either blot or mixture on that surface."

America, of course, is hardly the only country entangled in its racial legacy. In **The Spectacle of the Races** (Hill and Wang), the Brazilian historian Lilia Moritz Schwarcz examines how Brazilian intellectuals at the turn of the century, who valued racial "purity" as much as we now applaud racial "diversity," were dismayed by the prevalence of intermarriage in a country described by one writer as "a festival of colors." They put their hopes for "whitening"—or *branqueamento*—in yet further racial mixing, albeit carefully deployed. Schwarcz reproduces a bizarre painting of the time, which shows three generations of a family: in complete seriousness, the artist presents a dark grandmother with hands raised in benediction over a lighter-skinned daughter and a grandchild who is positively pallid.

Books.

[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

Set Sail with Patrick O'Brian



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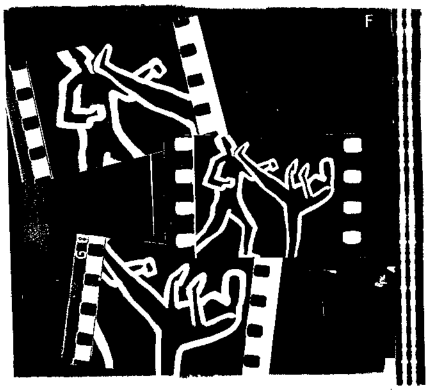


THE MOVIES

OPENING

Anywhere But Here—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 12. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

Dogma—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 12. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

Light It Up—The story of a hostage situation at a high school in Queens. Directed by Craig Bolotin. Opening Nov. 10. (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, Olympia, and Union Square.)

The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc—Reviewed this week in Critic at Large. Opening Nov. 12.

Pokémon: The First Movie—The trading-card-video-game-cartoon phenomenon comes to the big screen. Directed by Kunihiko Yuyama. Opening Nov. 10. (Chelsea Cinemas and Metro Cinema.)

Where's Marlowe?—A mock documentary about a Los Angeles private detective, directed by Daniel Pyne. Opening Nov. 12. (Sutton.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley (1918)—Pure panache. Mary Pickford has a robust, unaffected gaiety as Amarilly Jenkins, an Irish-American cigarette gal who plans to marry a bartender (William Scott) until a member of the swank set (Norman Kerry) starts to woo her and his do-gooding yet snobbish aunt tries to make her over. Pickford is irresistible, but she isn't the whole show. Frances Marion's script and Marshall Neilan's direction have a seductive grace and balance. After the heroine's family upsets a high-society tea, comic pathos turns into hilarity back at the tenement, where Amarilly's brothers spoof the posh routines. The only jarring note comes with a melodramatic turn near the end, which seems designed to get Amarilly's true love out of the bar and into a job at City Hall. Silent.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 13.)

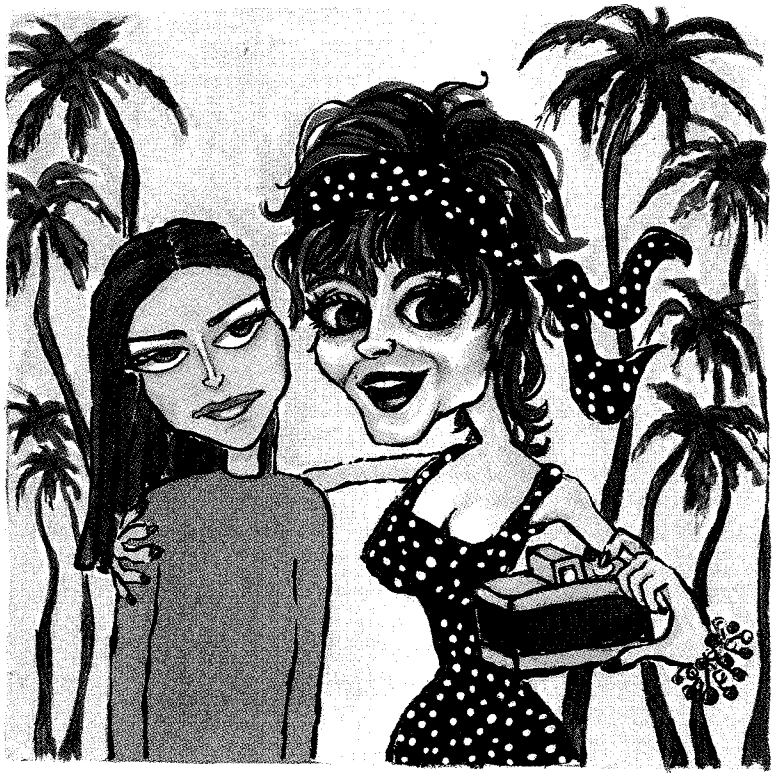
American Beauty—This amazing and impassioned fantasia about American loneliness begins as satire and ends with a vision of the sublime. The defeated suburban patriarch Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey), condemned by his withdrawn daughter (Thora Birch) and his hyper-organized wife (Annette Bening), drops out of his job and misbehaves badly. After Lester's marriage gets blown apart by squalls of comic contempt, the movie, which was written by Alan Ball and directed by the British theatre maestro Sam Mendes (it's his first film), opens up and takes in Lester's suburban territory—the dissatisfactions of the business-mad nineties, in which the gospel of selfishness leaves people clenched and isolated. The bitter satirical riffs slowly give way to a mystical appreciation of the vagrant beauty trapped beneath the surface of life.—*David Denby* (9/20/99) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Beekman, Kips Bay Theatres, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Being John Malkovich—An out-of-work puppeteer (John Cusack), his pet-loving girlfriend (Cameron Diaz), and a cynical office worker (Catherine Keener) take turns entering the head of the actor John Malkovich, where they remain for fifteen minutes at a time, experiencing everything he does, before being deposited with a whoosh beside the New Jersey Turnpike. This fantastic weightless comedy (sci-fi without the future or rockets or bad consequences), which was written by Charlie Kaufman and directed by Spike Jonze, plays with notions of celebrity worship and gender reversal, but the best thing about it is the genially deadpan style of its most absurd inventions. No great fuss is made about the launching pad for the Malkovich invasions, which is an office with ceilings so low that everyone must stoop. There are wonderful jokes—such as a monkey with bad memories, and Malkovich, possessed, doing spastic riffs equal to Steve Martin's in "All of Me." To see this actor who is known for his insolent equipoise literally freaking out is one of the more satisfying sights of the year.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Best Man—A sleek and somewhat sophisticated ensemble comedy by first-time writer-director Malcolm Lee. His frankly commercial idea—a "My Best Friend's Wedding" type of movie with some "Big Chill" background and Woody Allen references—concerns a group of reunited college friends, one of whom has written a novel based on their lives together. There's the standard lap-dancing bachelor party and who's-been-faithful-to-whom fodder, but the great-looking cast—Taye Diggs, Nia Long, Morris Chestnut, and particularly Terrence Howard (who steals the movie with his doggin' around)—turns it all into a finely tuned date movie.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

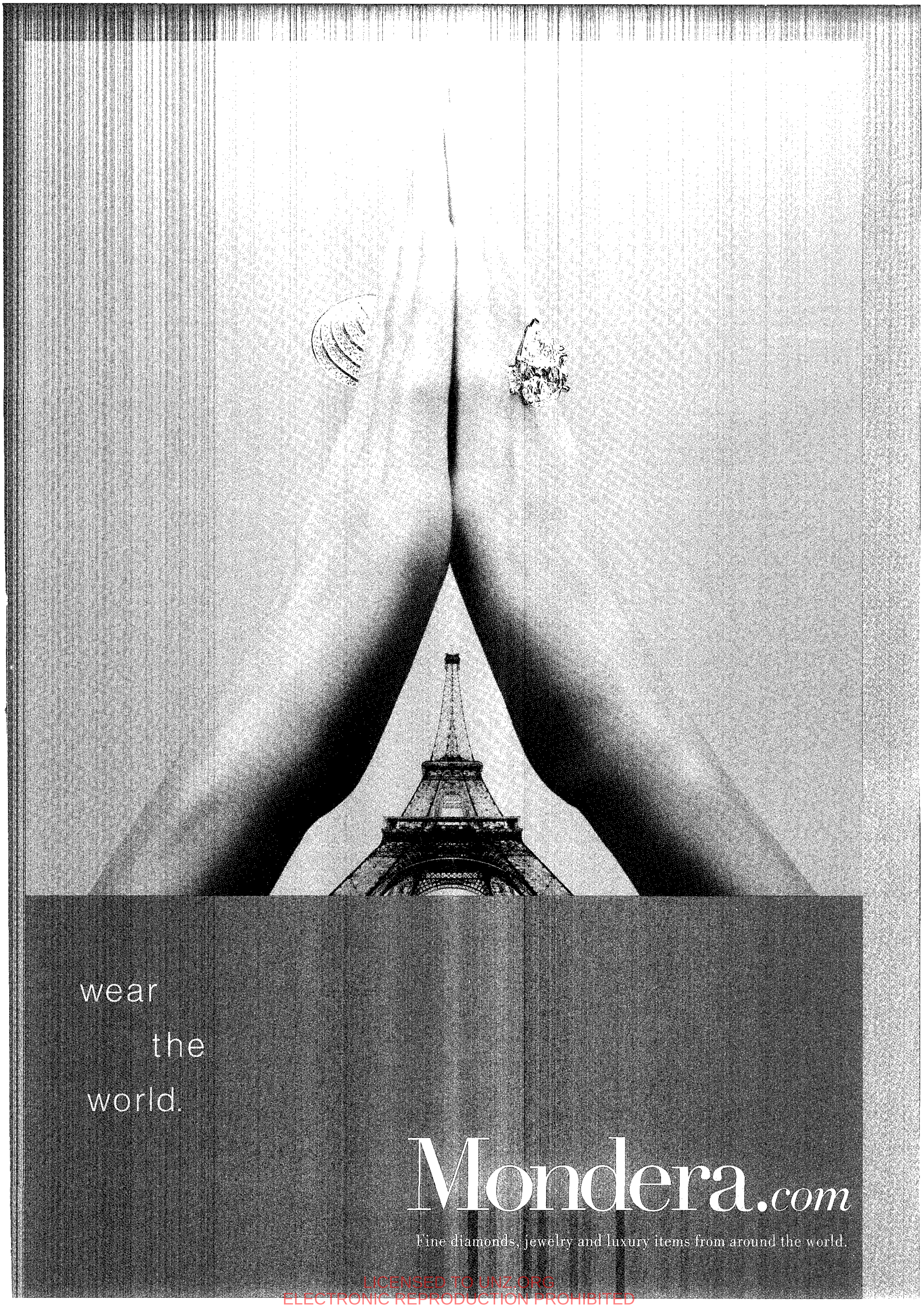
Boys Don't Cry—In small-town Nebraska, a young woman named Teena Brandon (Hilary Swank) clips her hair into a butch cut, flattens her breasts, puts on boys' clothes and a boy's swagger, and passes in the world as Brandon Teena, handsome young dude. What she feels is pure exhilaration, the excitement of leaving her past behind and becoming a lover; what we feel is dismay and fear. Brandon falls in with a group of derelict, white-trash kids and attracts the languid beauty Lana (Chloë Sevigny), who allows herself to think that Brandon is a man—with inevitably disastrous results. The movie is a fine, terrifying tragic poem that is also, at times, subversively funny: the women who like Brandon seem to want the feminine as well as the masculine in a lover. Directed by Kimberly Peirce, and written by Peirce and Andy Bienen. Based on actual events, which were the subject last year of a documentary called "The Brandon Teena Story."—*D.D.* (10/18-25/99) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

Bringing Out the Dead—The prospect of Martin Scorsese's teaming up with Paul Schrader—his screenwriter on "Taxi Driver" and other pictures—for a return to New York is a hugely enticing one. This time, the means of transport is an ambulance rather than a taxi, and the hero is a weary paramedic by the name of Frank Pierce (Nicolas Cage). Frank keeps losing more patients than he saves; indeed, his world has gone into decline before the story even begins, and Cage's dour, dark-eyed resignation sits uneasily with the restive, high-energy look of the film. It's not so much plotted as peopled with recurring figures, both alive and dead: a practicing lunatic, a young asthma sufferer who dies in Frank's arms, and a numb ex-junkie named Mary Burke (Patricia Arquette) who just won't leave him alone. Then there are the other paramedics, played by John Goodman, Tom Sizemore, and Ving Rhames. Of these, only Rhames takes the movie by the throat and finds the black farce within it, mocking the somnolence (and the lyrical voice-overs) that prevails elsewhere. This could only be a Scorsese film; nobody else can get off on the stimuli of a city with quite such panache. As for the identity of the city, that's another matter; few New Yorkers will recognize the round-the-clock hellhole in which the picture dwells. Stuck in the days of "Taxi Driver," it's more of a period



Natalie Portman and Susan Sarandon in "Anywhere But Here."

ROBERT MELEE



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piece than a contemporary drama; could Scorsese ever imagine streets that were not mean? Would we want him to?—*Anthony Lane* (11/1/99) (Astor Plaza, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

The City—David Riker's stunning first feature—four short films that dramatize the Latin-American immigrant experience in New York—is a quiet, unpolitical, reflective study of dreams and devastation. The nonprofessional actors and unresolved story lines give the film the feeling of an unfinished documentary, which allows the audience to carry over the various characters' anxieties from story to story. Shot in black-and-white, Riker's neorealistic imagery is subtle and quite moving. In Spanish and English.—*B.D.* (American Museum of the Moving Image and Quad Cinema.)

The Conformist (1970)—Bernardo Bertolucci wrote and directed this extraordinarily rich adaptation of the Alberto Moravia novel about an upper-class follower of Mussolini. It's set principally in 1938. Bertolucci's view isn't so much a reconstruction of the past as an infusion from it; the film cost only $750,000—Bertolucci brought together the décor and architecture surviving from that modernistic period and gave it all unity. Jean-Louis Trintignant, who conveys the mechanisms of thought through tension, the way Bogart did, is the aristocratic Fascist—an intelligent coward who sacrifices everything he cares about because he wants the safety of normality. Stefania Sandrelli is his deliciously corrupt, empty-headed wife, and Dominique Sanda, with her swollen lips and tiger eyes, is the lesbian he would like to run away with. The film succeeds least with its psychosexual approach to the Fascist protagonist, but if the ideas don't touch the imagination, the sensuous texture does. It's a triumph of feeling and of style—lyrical, flowing, velvety style, so operatic that you come away with sequences in your head like arias. Cinematography by Vittorio Storaro. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Walter Reade Theatre; Nov. 11.)

The Insider—Midnight calls, clandestine meetings, threatening E-mail messages, not to mention cell phones used as obsessively as lances and shields in a jousting epic: the circuits never stop burning in this self-important but juicily entertaining public-affairs melodrama about big-time journalism and corporate villainy. Russell Crowe plays the real-life whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand, who in 1995 had devastating things to reveal about his former employer, tobacco giant Brown & Williamson, and Al Pacino is the bristling "60 Minutes" producer Lowell Bergman, who wanted to bring Wigand's information to the public. The two men—one stolid, the other self-dramatizing—make an odd but satisfying couple; they are meant to represent two kinds of personal honor arrayed against venal or merely smooth corporate gameplayers, including Michael Gambon as a tobacco executive and Christopher Plummer as a mildly satirized Mike Wallace. Director Michael Mann creates a rising line of tension and paranoia which leads, paradoxically, to a muted, not entirely reassuring ending. Mann and Eric Roth wrote the screenplay, which is based on actual events and on Marie Brenner's reporting in *Vanity Fair.* With Bruce McGill and Diane Venora.—*D.D.* (11/8/99) (Chelsea West, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Union Square, and Waverly.)

Man of the Century—Johnny Twennies (Gibson Frazier) is a present-day New York newspaperman completely out of time: he's a speakeasy creature, blithely extant in the nineties, his clothes, lingo, haircut, and outlook snappily anachronistic. So it's all symbolic of Johnny's inability to cope with the modern world, right? Actually, it's just a movie about a real twenties guy somehow living in the nineties, and that conceit is all there is. You gotta like Frazier's moxie, as Johnny would say, but the black-and-white film, as directed by Adam Abraham, with whom Frazier co-wrote the script, doesn't have enough wit or depth to support the premise.—*Ken Marks* (Angelika Film Center.)

Music of the Heart—It's directed by horror king Wes Craven, but it's every bit as sappy as you suspected it might be. Meryl Streep portrays Roberta Guaspari, the real-life divorced mom who brought a violin program to Central Park East elementary school in East Harlem in 1980. The screenplay makes a couple of passes at presenting the teacher as an actual human being—some insecurity here, a bit of impatience and snappishness there—but mostly Streep is encouraged to create a cinematic saint. The other characters—principal Angela Bassett, boyfriend Aidan Quinn, mother Cloris Leachman, jealous teacher Josh Pais—are similarly painted by numbers. Only the kids show an occasional flicker of naturalness. The plot follows up the necessary crises with grand triumphs, and three standing ovations. Mr. Craven's thirst for overkill is undiminished.—*K.M.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

My Best Fiend—Klaus Kinski—"There was a big problem with Kinski," the director Werner Herzog says, more than once, about the five movies he and his leading man made together between 1972 and 1987. Kinski died in 1991, and this documentary is Herzog's attempt to come to terms with his relationship with the troubled man who was his friend, tormentor, alter ego, and the only actor megalomaniacal enough to convincingly play such Herzogian antiheroes as Aguirre, Fitzcarraldo, and Nosferatu. The film offers clips from the movies as well as footage of Kinski's on-set ravings, and the madness looks very much the same in both. Film clips in German, with subtitles; interviews and narration in English.—*K.M.* (Film Forum.)

Los Olvidados (1950; "The Young and the Damned")—Set in Mexico, Luis Buñuel's ruthless—almost surgical—examination of how the poor prey on one another is the most horrifying of all films about juvenile crime. Buñuel doesn't treat his characters as ideas but as morally responsible human beings; there is little of the familiar American-movie cant that makes everyone responsible for juvenile crimes except the juveniles. There's no pathos in this film; it's a squalid tragedy that causes the viewer to feel a moral terror. Buñuel, whose early work fascinated Freud, creates scenes that shock one psychologically. Among them here is the mother-meat dream—perhaps the greatest of all movie dream sequences; it is disturbing long after the lacerations of the more realistic material have healed. In Spanish.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 16.)

The Outlaw Josey Wales (1976)—This epic Western—a critical breakthrough for Clint Eastwood as an actor-director and for his company, Malpaso—has more emotional variety than most Eastwood Westerns, largely because (like "Unforgiven" after it) it puts Eastwood's Grim Reaper persona through unexpected twists. He plays Josey Wales, a Missouri farmer who turns Confederate guerrilla and postwar outlaw after ruthless Union raiders massacre first his family, then fellow Dixie warriors who (unlike Josey) have surrendered their arms. What makes the narrative refreshing is that it moves toward redemption as well as revenge, until Wales becomes the mainstay of a band of misfits, including a droll Indian sage (Chief Dan George) and two pioneer women (Paula Trueman as perky Grandma Sarah and Sondra Locke as her wide-eyed granddaughter). Jerry Fielding's score adds a succession of welcome jaunty strokes. And George gives a beguiling, lovable performance, the equal of his turn in "Little Big Man"; if he doesn't quite warm up Eastwood, he at least succeeds in getting us to see the rigid loner through his eyes. Philip Kaufman and Sonia Chernus wrote the script, from Forrest Carter's novel "Gone to Texas." (Kaufman also prepared the film; Eastwood took over as director.)—*M.S.* (Museum of Modern Art; Nov. 12.)

Princess Mononoke—This handsome, beautifully designed Japanese animated film has the size—though not the clarity—of a great Japanese film epic. The enormous landscapes and the variety of human and animal figures are gratifying, but the plot is more complicated than that of "The Ring of the Niebelungen." It's impossible, at times, to tell who's fighting on whose side, and why, so it's best not to try to make sense of everything but instead relax and enjoy the fantastic forest demons, the enormous wolves, the mix of slashing swords and arrows, and the enveloping, gelatinous forest-demon gunk. The movie may be semi-incoherent, but it's still gripping. Minnie Driver, Billy Crudup, Billy Bob Thornton, Gillian Anderson, and Claire Danes provide the voices. Hayao Miyazaki is the director.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Rosetta—The camera crowds in behind Rosetta (Emilie Dequenne), a girl maybe seventeen or eighteen, as she goes about her furious, mole-like economic activity, selling mended

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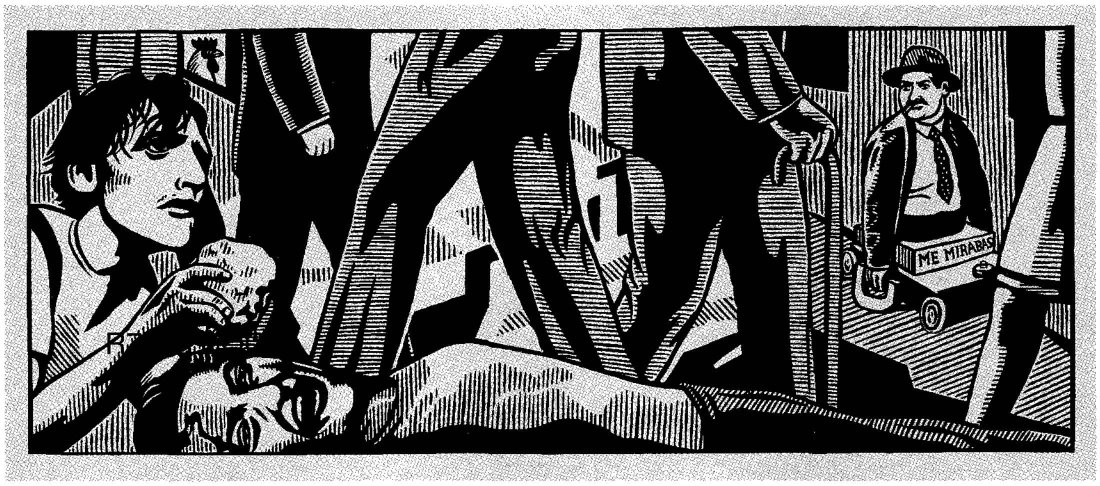
clothes, fishing in a miserable swamp, running back and forth between the trailer camp in which she lives and the waffle stands of a rain-soaked Belgian city. This dour but stirring masterpiece of moral inquiry (it won the Palme d'Or at Cannes last summer) was written and directed by the Belgians Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne, who appear, at first, to be Marxists without a program. Their appalling, unsmiling heroine, they seem to say, is the kind of pleasureless, other-annihilating person produced by the capitalist system. Yet they make Rosetta a person, not an economic integer, and their realization of her life is an outstanding imaginative feat. We await, with excited curiosity, those stirrings of Rosetta's consciousness which might suggest that she has emerged from the mud of her life for a breath of fresh air. In French.—*D.D.* (11/8/99) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

THE STRAIGHT STORY—By way of a comic coda to the violent “Lost Highway,” David Lynch has confounded all expectations and come up with a movie about a lawnmower. The model in question, a gas-guzzling 1966 John Deere, is ridden by the elderly Alvin Straight (who was a real person, but it's a perfect Lynch name) all the way from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wisconsin, on a mission of mercy to his brother, Lyle. The result is a perplexing blend of the ornery and the ornate; Richard Farnsworth plays Alvin as a stubbornly decent sort, while Lynch riddles his journey with bursts of calculated strangeness—including a house ablaze by the side of the road, attended by firemen who might have stepped out of “Blue Velvet.” The film is more crooked, in short, than the title would suggest, though it is also more sentimental; if Lynch is laying aside his power to shock, he has yet to discover what would most fruitfully take its place.—*A.L.* (11/1/99) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)



At BAM Rose Cinemas, Luis Buñuel's “Los Olvidados.”

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

ALSO PLAYING

AMERICAN MOVIE: Film Forum. . . . **THE BACHELOR:** Cinema II, Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **BATS:** Criterion Center and Union Square. . . . **BEEFCAKE:** The Screening Room. . . . **BLACK CAT, WHITE CAT:** American Museum of the Moving Image and Cinema Village. . . . **BLUE STREAK:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE BONE COLLECTOR:** Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE BRANDON TEENA STORY:** The Screening Room. . . . **BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE DEEP BLUE SEA:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE DINNER GAME:** Cinema Village and 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **DOUBLE JEOPARDY:** Art Greenwich Twin, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and State. . . . **DREAMING OF JOSEPH LEES:** Union Square. . . . **DRIVE ME CRAZY:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **EARTH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **FIGHT CLUB** (reviewed in our issue of 10/18-25/99): Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square. . . . **HAPPY, TEXAS** (10/11/99): Union Square. . . . **THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Union Square. . . . **JOE THE KING:** The Screening Room. . . . **JULIEN DONKEY-BOY:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **LAST NIGHT:** Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE LEGEND OF 1900:** Paris and Union Square. . . . **THE LIMEY** (10/11/99): Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square. . . . **LUCIE AUBRAC:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **MICKEY BLUE EYES:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **OUTSIDE PROVIDENCE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **PORTRAITS CHINOIS:** Quad Cinema. . . . **RANDOM HEARTS:** 64th and 2nd. . . . **ROMANCE** (9/27/99): Quad Cinema and Sutton. . . . **RUN LOLA RUN:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **SHOW ME LOVE:** The Screening Room. . . . **THE SIXTH SENSE** (8/23-30/99): Criterion Center, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SOME FISH CAN FLY:** Art Greenwich Twin and 64th and 2nd. . . . **STIGMATA:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **THE STORY OF US** (11/1/99): First & 62nd Street Cinemas, Union Square, and Ziegfeld. . . . **THREE KINGS** (10/4/99): Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Waverly. . . . **THREE TO TANGO:** Criterion Center, East 85th Street, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TRAIN OF LIFE:** Lincoln Square and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE WINSLOW BOY** (5/17/99): East 85th Street.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

FILM FORUM, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 11: “The Lady Vanishes” (1938, Alfred Hitchcock) and “The 39 Steps” (1935, Hitchcock). . . . From Nov. 12: “Macbeth” (1971, Roman Polanski).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of new films from Germany; most in German, with English subtitles. Nov. 11 at 2:30: “Jacob the Liar” (1974, Fred Beyer). . . . Nov. 11 at 6: “The Shoe” (Laila Pakalnina; in Latvian and Russian). . . . Nov. 12 at 2:30 and Nov. 13 at 5: “Yara” (Yilmaz Arslan; in German and Turkish). . . . Nov. 12 at 6 and Nov. 14 at 2: “Oskar and Leni” (Petra Katharina Wagner). . . . Nov. 12 at 8: “The Hitler Phenomenon—Deception and Reality” (Irmgard von zur Mühlen). . . . Nov. 13 at 2 and Nov. 16 at 2:30: “Life Is the Main Thing” (Connie Walther). . . . Nov. 14 at 5 and Nov. 15 at 2: “23” (Hans-Christian Schmid). . . . Nov. 15 at 6: “Paths in the Night” (Andreas Kleinert). . . . Nov. 16 at 6: “Places in the City” (Angela Schanelec; in German and French). . . . ¶ A program of silent films, 1893 to 1928, from the museum's collection. Nov. 11 at 3: A program of films made by D. W. Griffith at the Biograph Studio in 1911. . . . Nov. 13 at 2: “The Toll Gate” (1920, Lambert Hillyer). . . . Nov. 13 at 5: “Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley” (†). . . . Nov. 14 at 2: “Hell's Hinges” (1916, William S. Hart and Charles Swickard). . . . Nov. 14 at 5: “Wild Bill Hickok” (1923, Clifford S. Smith). . . . Nov. 16 at 2: “Queen Elizabeth” (1912, Louis Mercanton). . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 6:30: “Today Is a Good Day: Remembering Chief Dan George” (1998, Loretta Todd), a documentary. . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 3: “The Outlaw Josey Wales” (†). . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 6: “Straight Shooting” (1917, Jack Ford; silent). . . . ¶ Nov. 12 at 8: “Hell Bent” (1918, Ford; silent).

WALTER READE THEATRE, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—From Nov. 10: “The Silence” (1988) and “A Moment of Innocence” (1996), two films by Mohsen Makhmalbaf; in Farsi, with English subtitles. . . . ¶ Nov. 11 at 7:30: “The Conformist” (†).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Three films directed by Bo Widerberg; in Swedish, with English subtitles. Nov. 10: “The Man on the Roof” (1976). . . . Nov. 11: “The Man from Majorca” (1984). . . . Nov. 12: “The Serpent's Way” (1986). . . . ¶ Nov. 13-14: “Blow-Up” (1966, *Michelangelo Antonioni*). . . . ¶ Nov. 15: “Forbidden” (1932, Frank Capra). . . . ¶ Nov. 16: “Los Olvidados” (†).

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films featuring Katharine Hepburn. Nov. 13 at 2: “Holiday” (1938, George Cukor). . . . Nov. 13 at 4: “The Philadelphia Story” (1940, Cukor). . . . Nov. 14 at 2: “Woman of the Year” (1942, George Stevens). . . . Nov. 14 at 4:30: “Adam's Rib” (1949, Cukor).

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE, 151 W. 19th St. (989-4850)—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Nov. 14 at 7, the feature will be “Deception” (1946, Irving Rapper).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Nov. 16 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: “A Brother” (1997, Sylvie Verheyde; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Nov. 11-14: The 13th New York Lesbian & Gay Experimental Film/Video Festival.

QUAD CINEMA, 34 W 13th St.—Nov. 10-18: The 9th Annual New Italian Cinema Events Festival, featuring full-length and short films. (For information, call 468-2477.)

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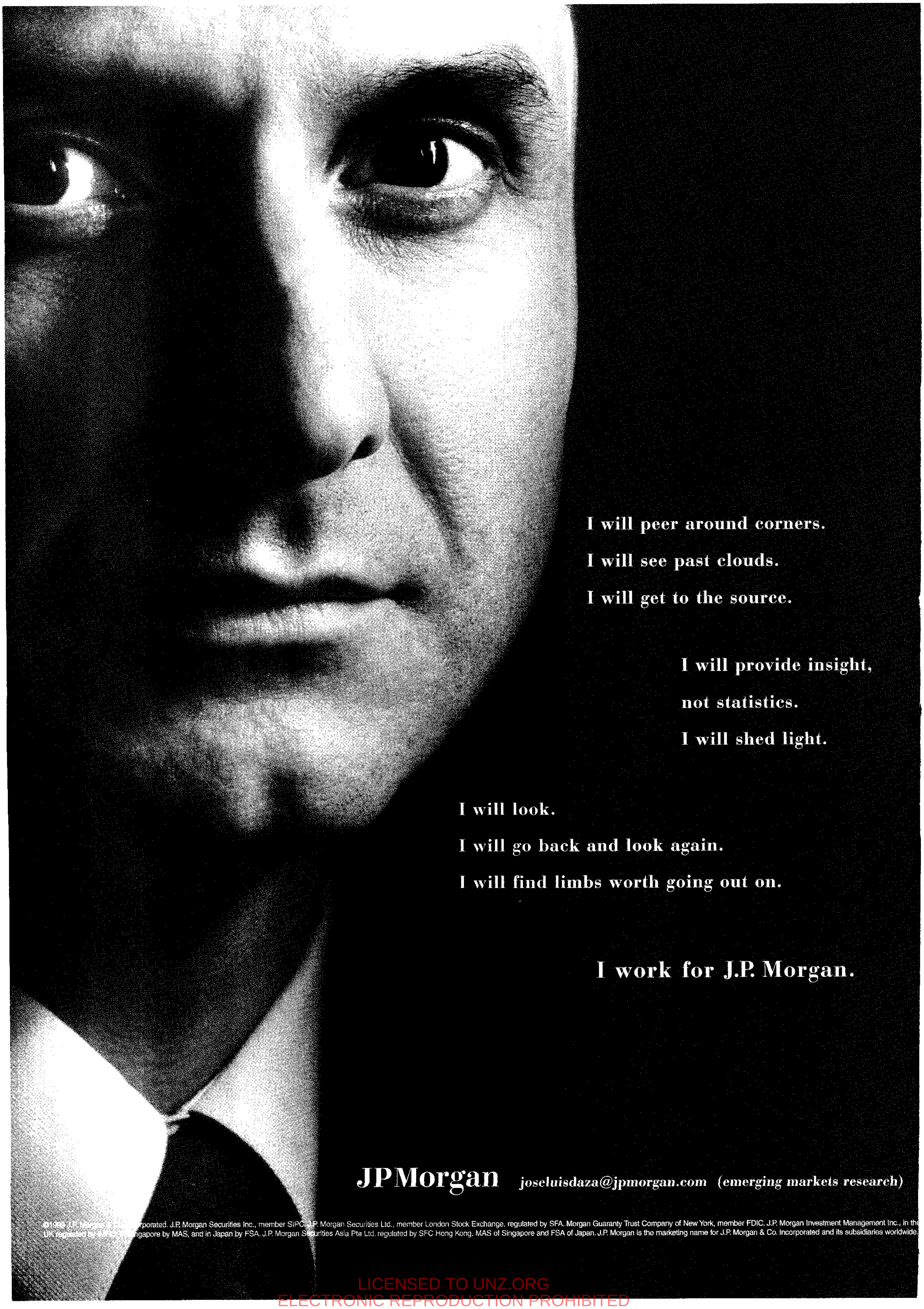
I will peer around corners.
I will see past clouds.
I will get to the source.
I will provide insight,
not statistics.
I will shed light.
I will look.
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I will find limbs worth going out on.
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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

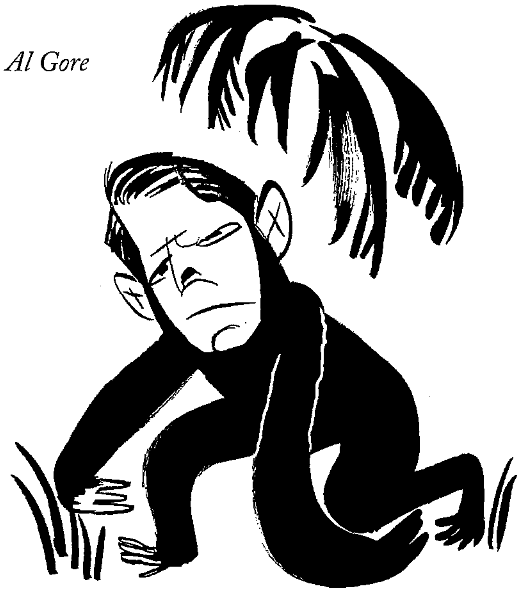
Psychobabble's out, biobabble's in.

THE news that Naomi Wolf's campaign advice to the Vice-President included the suggestion that he is a beta male who must adopt alpha-male behavior could not be a clearer demonstration of the fact that in the broad American culture pop psychology has been supplanted by pop Darwinism. As recently as four years ago, when would-be cultural critics wanted to explain character they resorted to pseudo-Freudianism: Wolf was among them when, in 1995, she told Dick Morris that President Clinton would win a second term only if he repositioned himself as a strong, assertive "good father." But now that the principles of evolutionary psychology have filtered into the mass consciousness—these days, everyone understands that men are slaves to their genetic predisposition to seek out beautiful women and then to be unfaithful to them with other beautiful women—psychobabble has been eclipsed by biobabble. (The new thinking was behind the national "So what?" that greeted Clinton's Monica dalliance.) Philip Larkin had it wrong: it wasn't your mom and dad who fucked you up; it was the ancestral environment.

The trouble with grade-school animal behaviorism of the kind Wolf tossed at Gore, it turns out, is that, scientifically speaking, the alpha male is not all he has been cracked up to be, and probably isn't whom you want leading your country anyway. According to Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, a distinguished primatologist and the author of the recently published book "Mother Nature," the popular notion of the alpha male as the ape who gets to have sex with all the females and swagger past all the other males is something of a myth, a projection of the hopes and wishes of evolutionary biologists—who, at least in the early days of the science, were mostly élite males. "The male hope is that there is one 'best male,'" Hrdy said the other day. "And, of course, in the back of his mind, there is always the fantasy 'It's me.'"

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Al Gore



Actually, according to Hrdy, the alpha male in a primate troop can be a far more compromised figure. In recent years, DNA evidence has proved what some female primatologists had long suspected: that female apes were slipping out from under the noses of their supposedly dominant males and getting together with apes from the other side of the tracks. A female langur monkey who seeks out sex with more than one male may be doing so in order to blur the paternity of her offspring, and thus discourage any male, whether alpha, beta, or delta, from harming offspring that might be his. Pulling a fast one on the alpha male is eminently sensible, and, apparently, he falls for it every time.

In any case, alpha males, who cling to power and act with expediency for selfish ends, don't make the best leaders. "Voting for an alpha male is such a dumb idea," Hrdy said. "Who wants to vote for someone whose primary goal is to keep his ratings up?" Clinton's bombings of the Sudan and Afghanistan last year were, she added, "an alpha-male kind of thing to do."

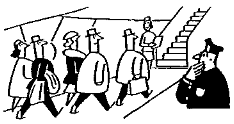
In order to define the ideal leader in the human realm, Hrdy draws on kin-selection theory. "She would be a grandmother, post-reproductive age, and she would have perhaps twelve grandchildren," Hrdy said. Those grandchildren would be taken away from their grandmother and scattered across the country in secret locations. That way, Grandma would have to take into account the effects of her actions upon everyone, everywhere, and act on behalf of the general good, since everything she did might be helping or harming one of her offspring. So she'd be inclined to act in the interests of future generations, rather than in the interests of future campaign contributors.

Gore may be insufficiently elderly and female to match Hrdy's perfect-leader profile—where is Barbara Bush when you need her?—but perhaps he can approximate her definition. He has already shown some encouragingly un-alpha behavior: his long-held commitment to environmentalism, for example, demonstrates that he values future global interests over immediate selfish ones. Next, he should send those four attractive Gore children off, with instructions to spread themselves across America and never call home. He should also get a vasectomy, to prevent the possibility of his spawning any further offspring, so that he will be a hundred-per-cent invested in caring for those who already exist. This may sound like extreme advice, but, if anyone is going to make a monkey of the Vice-President, surely it should be a primatologist rather than a Wolf.

—Rebecca Mead

THE BENCH

An investigation of American Airlines targets hazardous cargo.



LAST week, as authorities were investigating the tragic crash of an Egypt Air flight carrying two hundred and seventeen people, a very different sort of investigation, involving a different airline, was unfolding in Miami, and it is not likely to ease fears about the safety of air travel. A federal grand jury in Miami is deciding whether to bring criminal charges against American Airlines for transporting "hazardous cargo" on passenger flights without making sure that the cargo was legal, and would not spill or ignite.

The story begins on October 1, 1997, when a package of Dowicide A, a noxious pesticide that burns the eyes and lungs, ruptured as it was being loaded onto an American Airlines 757 in Miami, forcing the evacuation of fifty-three passengers and crew members. A company called Executive Freight Consolidators had managed to place five hundred pounds of Dowicide A aboard the jet; the legal limit is 2.2 pounds. Executive's president, Angel Fuentes, was arrested by the F.B.I. (He has since pleaded guilty to hazardous-materials violations.)

A few weeks later, on October 22nd, about sixty federal agents arrived at American's offices in Miami. They presented a search warrant and went to work, seizing documents and computers. American, like many major airlines, carries freight on passenger flights as a sideline; airlines charge especially high rates to transport material classified as hazardous—for example, corrosive, combustible, or poisonous substances for chemical companies and medical laboratories. In 1998, American grossed $649 million, about four per cent of its total revenue, from all types of cargo.

Since the F.B.I. raid, American has been served with several subpoenas, and a number of its employees have testified before the grand jury in Miami. (Though no one seemed to notice, American disclosed these facts in its most recent annual report to stockholders.) It was independently confirmed last week that the federal investigation was drawing to a close, and that it had extended beyond the Dowicide incident. A spokeswoman for American said, simply, "We have coöperated with federal authorities for the past two years, and we will continue to coöperate."

"Combis," as the commercial-airline industry calls flights carrying both passengers and cargo, weren't discussed much as a safety issue until May, 1996, when a shipment of chemical-oxygen generators on a ValuJet flight ignited over the Florida Everglades, killing all hundred and ten people on board. Afterward, aviation officials banned oxygen cannisters on passenger planes, and made noises about cracking down on hazardous-cargo violations, but last year the F.A.A. issued five times as many warning letters as fines. The airlines, it appears, still accept many types of shipments on faith, without adequate inspection, and, in some cases, with no inspection at all. Michael Hubbard, a special agent in charge of criminal investigations for the E.P.A., said last week, "It's a time bomb and everybody knows it. This is about greed at the expense of safety."

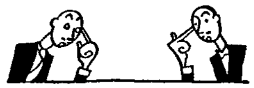
Nowhere are the dangers of accepting cargo on faith more apparent than along the Latin-American routes that American Airlines dominates via its hub, in Miami. American's presence in the region has already had undesired consequences. Last August, fifty-eight of American's baggage handlers and food-contract workers were indicted and charged with smuggling cocaine, heroin, and weapons aboard American flights between Colombia and Miami; the drugs were allegedly stashed in unopened coffee packets, in wall panels, and, on one plane, inside the wheel bays.

Cargo in and out of Latin America appears to be at the center of the federal grand-jury investigation of American—the Dowicide shipment on the Miami flight, for instance, was headed for Ecuador—and this time the target is the corporation itself, not some low-level workers. John Hensley, a special agent in charge of the Los Angeles Division of the United States Customs Service, who has no involvement in the Miami investigation, summed up the problem this way: "Some guy in Bogotá or Caracas wants to ship something hazardous, like Freon, to Miami. He takes it to his buddy at the airport, and the buddy tells him to put it in plain boxes and mark it 'Toys.' And it goes. We see this happening again and again."

—Fredric Dannen & Ira Silverman

DEPT. OF ORAL EXAMS

Hoagland for President.



THIS idea of ambushing politicians and asking them fussy little nitpicky factual questions (as opposed to normal questions like "What's your vision for America?" and "Why are you plummeting in the polls?") goes back at least to 1984, when Michael Kinsley, who was then at *The New Republic*, told friends that he had a question for President Reagan. "Mr. President," Kinsley said he wanted to say, "you have described Guatemala as vital to the national-security interests of the United States. Name one Guatemalan." Kinsley was only fantasizing; those were more innocent times.

Now comes one Andy Hiller, political reporter for a Boston television station, who made page one of last Friday's Washington *Post* by luring George W. Bush, the Republican Presidential front-runner, before a camera and then demanding that he name the Presidents of Chechnya and Taiwan, the military ruler of Pakistan, and the Prime Minister of India. You could say that Bush had asked for this by going around calling Greeks Grecians and Kosovars Kosovarians, but it was still a pretty mean trick. The *Post's* story said that "the interview got at the crux of what Bush's rivals say he lacks most: the familiarity with international affairs that the public expects from the leader of the world's only remaining super-

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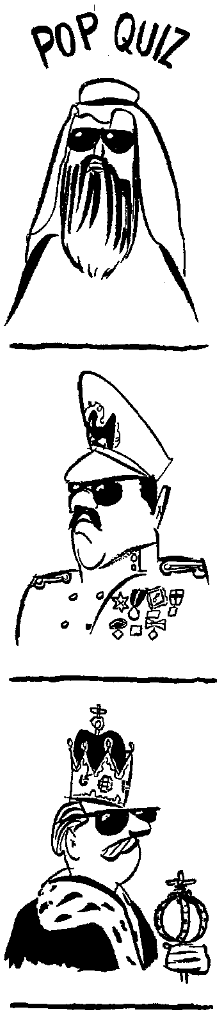

power.” The interview got at no such crux, of course. We *want* our leaders to know what’s going on in places like Central and South Asia and to have some idea of what it all means, but the name of the President of Chechnya? Please.

Governor Bush actually got one of the questions right: he knew that the President of Taiwan is called Mr. Lee. A pretty strong showing, in our opinion. We wondered if famous journalists would do as well, so we designed our own stupid pop quiz, telephoned a few randomishly selected big-time chinpullers, and started firing countries and names at the ones who were courteous or foolhardy enough to play along. The countries were real; the names, chosen to evoke generic foreign heads of state, were (from a policy standpoint) ringers.

THE COUNTRIES (with their top dogs): France (President Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin); Sudan (President Omar al-Bashir); Venezuela (President Hugo Chávez); Afghanistan (Taliban Supreme Leader Mullah Muhammad Omar); Slovenia (President Milan Kucan); Georgia (President Eduard Shevardnadze); Austria (President Thomas Klestil); Switzerland (President Ruth Dreifuss).

THE NAMES (with identities): Jean-Georges Vongerichten (celebrity chef); Shun Lee West (upscale New York Chinese restaurant); Toni Kukoc (basketball player); Ntozake Shange (playwright); ZaSu Pitts (star of silent and talking pictures); Tesfaye Bekele (Ethiopian marathon runner); Napoleon Lajoie (turn-of-the-last-century baseball player); baba ghanouj (appetizer); Kaki Hockersmith (interior decorator); Yma Sumac (Peruvian singer).

Nobody got ’em all, of course. Some respondents opted for the strategy that Dubya should’ve chosen: deflection. “No way, man,” said William Kristol, the editor of *The Weekly Standard*. “I’m not on ‘Jeopardy.’ ” Mortimer Zuckerman, the owner of the *Daily News* and *U.S. News & World Report*, got Chirac right, but then—after saying, in answer to the second question (Who’s the leader of Sudan?), “He’s my brother-in-law”—rang off, politely but firmly. Jonathan Alter, the *Newsweek* columnist, essayed a few partial-credit-type answers (e.g., “I know the difference between Slovenia and Slovakia, but I don’t know the President of either”) and concluded, with a sigh, “Probably the only person who could get all your questions right is Bill Clinton.”

Leslie Gelb, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, was hit-and-miss on the countries but a standout on the names. Toni Kukoc? “He is a starter for the Chicago Bulls, and he’s six-eleven, and can play forward as well as guard, and he’s Croatian.” ZaSu Pitts? “An actress, in the thirties and forties.” Kaki Hockersmith? “The roller-blading champion of Belgium.” (That last answer is not strictly correct, but it wins points for plausibility.)

William F. Buckley, Jr., the conservative patriarch and founder of *National Review*, handled the interrogation with the easy languor for which he is known throughout the English-speaking world. “These are the kinds of details it’s easy to forget under pressure. That is to be distinguished from making a grammatical mistake, which is unforgivable,” he trilled. Yeah, buddy, but who runs France? “You mean Jospin, or the President?” Mr. Buckley replied. “I had the President on my show several years ago, back when he was mayor.” Of Paris, which Chirac was. How about Afghanistan? “Oh, he’s a bad boy, that one. Mmm, yes, he’s even become an eponym. You know what an eponym is?”

Mr. Buckley proved adept not only at answering questions with questions—“Shun Lee West? Is that a Mandarin pronunciation?”—but also at answering them with anecdotes. “Am I keeping you?” he asked smoothly, at about the midpoint of a stream of consciousness. “I was the guest of the Ambassador to Switzerland once, and there were ambassadors from fourteen different countries, some with unpronounceable seven- or eight-syllable names, and he knew them all by heart. Presumably it took him hours to memorize them. Of course, our ambassadors to Switzerland have nothing to do.”

Partial transcript of a conversation with Christopher Hitchens, boulevardier on five continents, Washington tittle-tattle, and prolific writer for *Vanity Fair*, *The Nation*, and Fleet Street:

France? Lionel Jospin . . . There’s a Presidential system as well. I suppose there’s a margin for error.

Shun Lee West? That’s a restaurant on West Sixty-fifth Street. Sixty-fifth and Amsterdam, I think.

Sudan? Got me.

Toni Kukoc? Got me again.

Venezuela? I really, really should know that. I can tell you quite a lot about him. He’s new. A populist soldier. I can’t tell you his name. Damn.

ZaSu Pitts? Sounds like someone from “The Lion King.”

Slovenia? Milan Kucan. With the “c” pronounced as in “Milosevic.”

Tesfaye Bekele? Must be of Ethiopian descent.

Georgia? Shevardnadze.

Napoleon Lajoie? He’s a brothel-keeper in New Orleans.

Baba ghanouj? “Spoiled daddy” in Levantine Arabic. Made from aubergines.

Kaki Hockersmith? Sounds like an equestrienne. Kaki Hockersmith—onomatopoeically, an equestrienne.

Yma Sumac? I don’t know. . . . You know, I feel this is all my fault. I once asked Charlton Heston, during the Gulf War, whether he knew the countries that bordered Iraq. He couldn’t do it. . . . I’ve now been hoist on my own petard.

The hands-down winner of the pop quiz was Jim Hoagland, foreign-affairs columnist of the Washington *Post*. The first question, about who’s in charge in France, was one that almost everybody got right, but Mr. Hoagland had a trump card to play. “I’m calling you from Paris,” he said kindly. “And I happen to have shaken hands this afternoon with Jacques Chirac. But your questions are going to get more obscure, I’m sure.”

Which they did. Mr. Hoagland missed the Chinese restaurant, but he aced most of the rest. He knew that ZaSu Pitts was an early television star as well as a movie actress. He knew that Kaki Hockersmith decorated the White House for the Clintons. He knew that Toni Kukoc is with the Bulls. He even knew what position Nap Lajoie used to play. (Second base.) He thought that the President of Venezuela—“the crazy general, elected about two months ago”—was named Perez rather than Chávez,

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but that was closer than anyone else came. He was the only one to nail the Austrian head of state. The President of Slovenia? “Boy, that’s a tough one,” he said, and laughed. “Tony Kukoc! No, it’s Kucan, no? First name Milo, or something like that.” Yma Sumac? “She’s always in the New York *Times* crossword puzzle. A singer.” Baba ghanouj? “A very nice Lebanese hors d’oeuvre.” And check out Mr. Hoagland’s cake-taking reply to the question about Mort Zuckerman’s Sudanese brother-in-law:

> I consider Turabi to be the leader. Now that’s kind of a trick question, because there’s General Bashir, but Turabi, I think, is the real leader. I haven’t paid attention the last two weeks, though, and with Sudan you never know.

That rates a 10.0, don’t you think?

By the way, the President of Chechnya is Aslan Maskhadov, the ruler of Pakistan is (since last month’s coup) General Pervez Musharraf, the Prime Minister of India is Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Mr. Lee’s first—that is, last—name is Teng-hui, as in President Lee Teng-hui of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

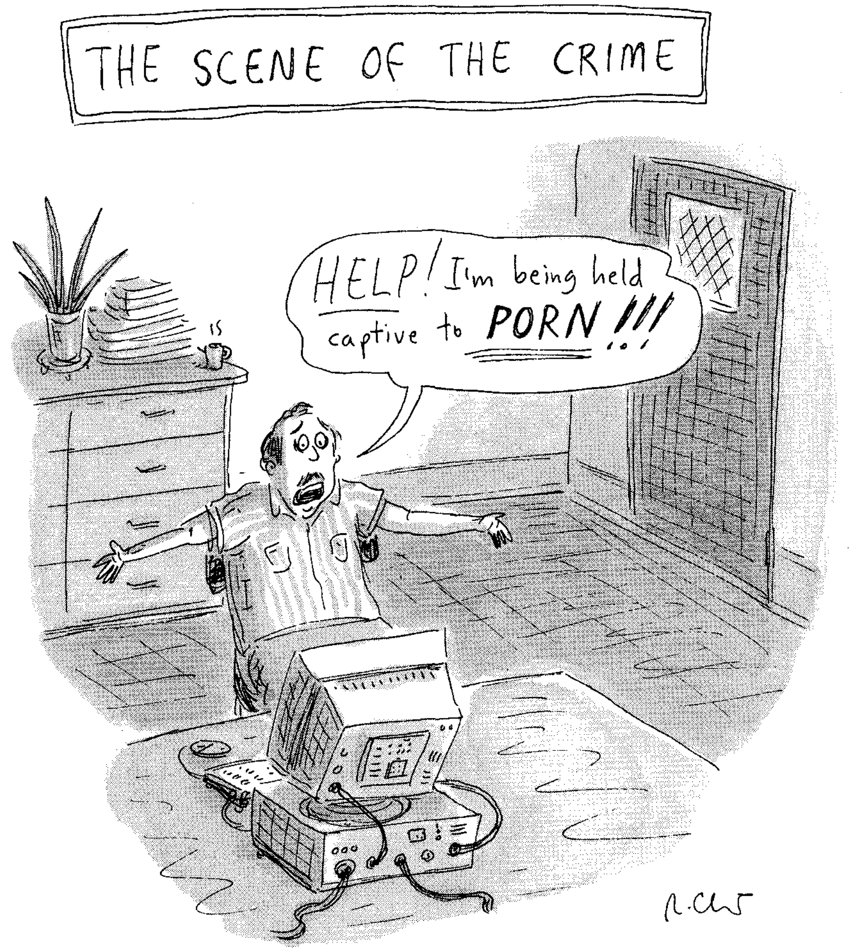
—HENDRIK HERTZBERG

STOCK-MARKET FOLLIES

How a new Internet company warmed up for Wall Street.

“LET’S keep the check marks sea-foam,” Kay Peters said, staring at a chart labelled “Emerging Markets” in the conference room of Liquid Audio, a three-and-a-half-year-old Silicon Valley company. “The same color as the company name—that’s nice continuity.”

Liquid Audio, whose product, according to its own literature, “offers a . . . secure means of digitally distributing music on the Internet,” was about to go public. Lehman Brothers, the investment bank managing the public offering, had recommended Peters, a New York-based media consultant, to coach the company’s top executives, Gerry Kearby and Gary Iwatani, for their upcoming I.P.O. road show, an eleven-day series of sales meetings with potential investors in twenty-two cities, with stops in Milan, Copenhagen, and London.


THE SCENE OF THE CRIME
HELP! I'm being held captive to PORN!!!
R. Chast

With four days to go before the trip, Peters stood in front of a huge monitor at Liquid Audio’s headquarters and dissected the planned sales pitch.

A garish pie chart labelled “Long Term Revenue Model” appeared on the monitor.

“Looks like we were going for a kind of ‘Partridge Family’ thing,” Iwatani said.

Peters gestured with her reading glasses at Digital Sales, the largest pie slice, and said, “That red should definitely become salmon.”

Iwatani typed a command into his laptop, and a dozen or so little boxes of different pinks appeared on the screen. He selected one—kind of a pale sushi—and looked to Peters for approval.

“That’s fine,” the consultant said, with a glance at her watch, “but please, let’s move on.” Peters, in a rust-colored suit, accessorized simply with briefcase and cell phone, was being paid three thousand two hundred dollars per day, and she still had a lot of ground to cover. “She’s like a high-school principal,” Gerry Kearby, the C.E.O., said later. “Just way better dressed.”

Before she became a consultant, Peters worked as an actress, and she regularly appeared as the judge on the television show “CHiPs.” “I served on the Telecommunications Committee for the Screen Actors Guild,” she said. “I would see people reading these speeches, and I noticed that the ideas just weren’t getting across. I realized it wasn’t just about saying the words. It was also, maybe, how you said them.”

The next graphic on the monitor was Revenue Growth. Two square green columns compared Liquid Audio’s income in 1997 and 1998.

“I like the green,” Peters remarked.

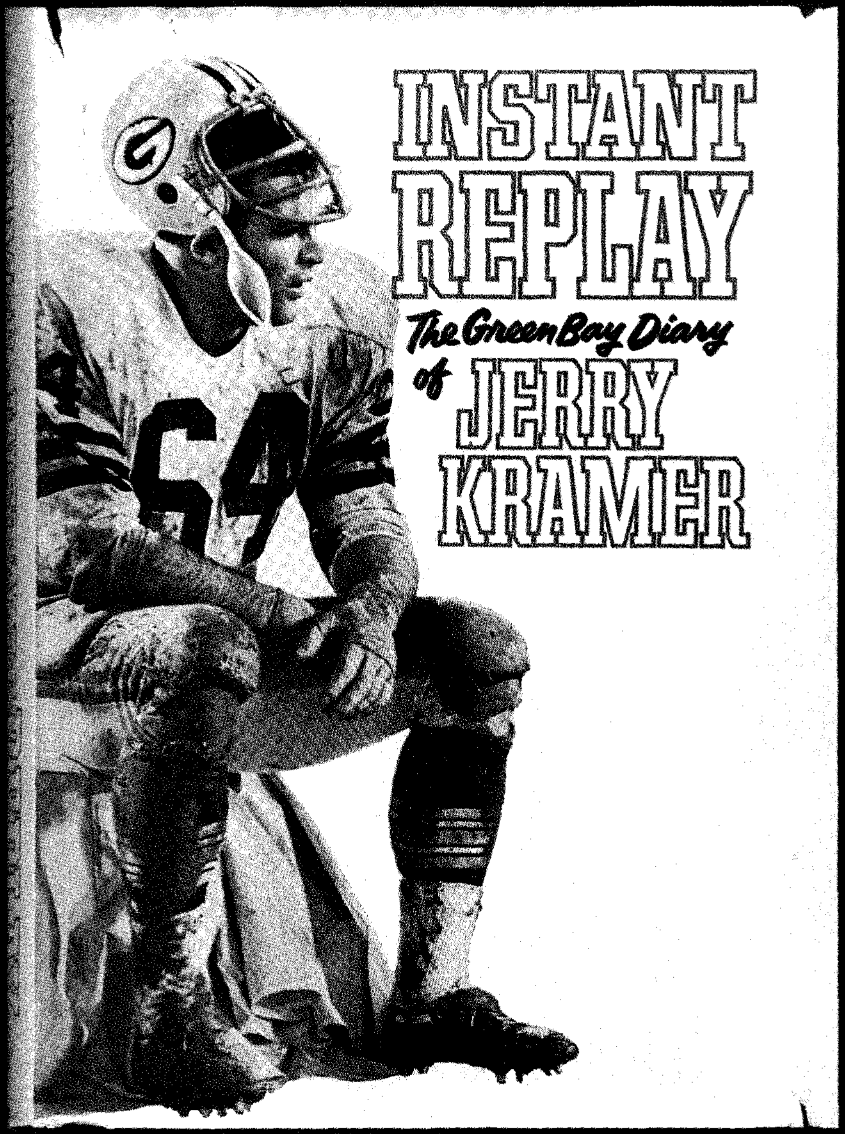
“Yeah,” Kearby said. “Like money.”

“But you want to make those columns much bigger,” Peters advised. “You want them to *announce* themselves.”

Iwatani wasn’t sure. In 1997, the company’s revenues were two hundred and fifty-six thousand dollars; in 1998, they were more than ten times that amount. But in the context of the future, the Big Idea that he and Kearby planned to sell on the road, those numbers looked small. “That figure was just from software licensing,” he said.

“Gary,” Peters interrupted. “How many Internet companies coming to an

Jan. 19, 1970. Mom accidentally donates to church book drive.


INSTANT REPLAY
The Green Bay Diary of JERRY KRAMER
64

Nov. 30, 1999. Mom redeems herself on Alibris for son's 40th birthday.

alibris
www.alibris.com

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Books you thought you'd never find.

I.P.O. have any revenue? At all? Don't apologize for the fact that you know how to make money."

Iwatani nodded, hit the keys, and the green towers doubled in size. "This all *looks* very good," Peters said. "But these bankers hear pitches all day long. You've really got to draw them in. One way to do that is *mirroring*. When a banker asks you a question in a real loud voice," she said, grinning, "you be real loud right back."

"I can do that," Kearby said softly.

"But the most important thing here," Peters said, "all that really matters, of course, is the story. You've got to tell them a good story."

"O.K.," Kearby said. "How about this?" After each point, he slammed his palm against the edge of the conference table for emphasis. "The music industry is huge, and ripe for change." *Whap.* "We're the first to develop an end-to-end solution." *Whap.* "We have serious and powerful players, like EMI Records, as partners." *Whap.*

Peters looked thoughtful, and then nodded. "I've trained a lot of people for I.P.O. road shows," she said, "and this, guys, I've never done before: right now I'm trying to figure out how to get my hands on some of your stock. Because that is a very good story."

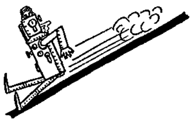
Peters was right. Liquid Audio stock, which was priced by bankers to open at fifteen dollars per share, went up to forty-eight dollars on July 9th, the first day of trading, before settling, at the market close, at $36.56, which meant that Wall Street valued the company at about $720 million. The stock coasted through the subsequent "quiet period," during which companies who have recently gone public forbid media coverage of their I.P.O.s. One day last week, it was still holding steady, at thirty-seven dollars.

The day after the offering, it was hard to get Gerry Kearby on the telephone. A call to the Liquid Audio headquarters was answered by one of Kearby's colleagues. A loud celebration was going on in the office. Kearby wasn't there, though. "There's a former consultant who thinks he didn't get enough stock. So we're being sued," the colleague explained. "Gerry's at the lawyer's office. He's stuck there all day." A cork popped in the background. "Deposition training."

—JOHN MANKIEWICZ

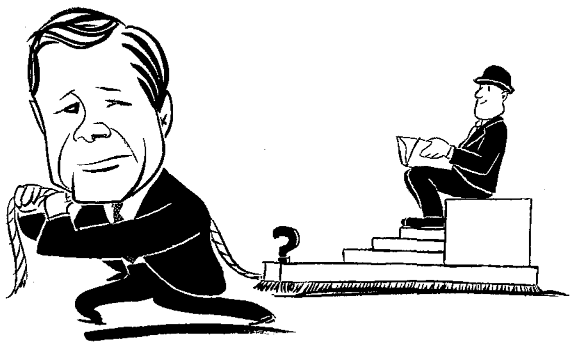
DOT COM FILE

Let's play Stump the On-Line Butler!



When Michael Ovitz, the Hollywood agent turned Hollywood manager, opened a new talent agency last year, he quickly signed Leonardo DiCaprio, Cameron Diaz, and Robin Williams as clients. Ovitz is planning to introduce his newest client at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, in the form of a twenty-foot-tall float: he is a pasty-looking cartoon figure, named Jeeves, who betrays no discernible personality. Jeeves is the mascot of Ask.com, an Internet search-engine Web site that lets you pose questions to Jeeves, who is supposed to help you find the answer. Ovitz hopes to use his formidable starmaking power to turn Jeeves into a brand name.

Ted Briscoe, the senior vice-president and general manager of Ask.com, which is owned by an information-retrieval company called Ask Jeeves, sees multiple advantages in the Ovitz connection. "Ovitz's background as a Hollywood superagent will allow Ask Jeeves to tap into his contacts and his insider knowledge of the entertainment industry," Briscoe told a reporter recently. The digital Jeeves, Briscoe contends, is no relation to Bertie Wooster's valet, the gentleman's gentleman and "fellow of infinite resource and sagacity" familiar to readers of P. G. Wodehouse.



Alexa McCann, an Ask.com publicist, says, "You can type in a question as if you were asking a friend, and our natural-language technology figures out what you're asking. Then Jeeves will take you to a specific page."

Not exactly. When you ask a question of Jeeves, you aren't taken anywhere. Instead, several jazz riffs on your question appear on the screen, and you are asked to click on the one that most closely resembles your original query. Then you are referred to an appropriate Web site for an answer. Jeeves's reformulations may retain the sense of your question, or they may be wildly off base. The Web site wants users to feel that they are talking to a polite, knowledgeable valet, but it's more like talking to a roomful of valets who have been drinking heavily.

We decided to test-drive Ask Jeeves by asking the valet some questions about himself.

Q: Do you agree that Ovitz's background as a Hollywood superagent will allow you to tap into his insider knowledge of the entertainment industry?
Ask Jeeves: Where can I learn about the home-improvement subject framing: interior details?

Q: Are you excited to meet Robin Williams and Cameron Diaz?
Ask Jeeves: Where can I find personal ads?

Q: How does Jeeves feel about merchandising, animation, and placement in movies and television shows?
Ask Jeeves: Where can I buy TVs on line?

Q: Will you appear in a movie some day?
Ask Jeeves: What day is it?

Q: How tall is Jeffrey Katzenberg?
Ask Jeeves: Where can I find a concise encyclopedia article on altitude?

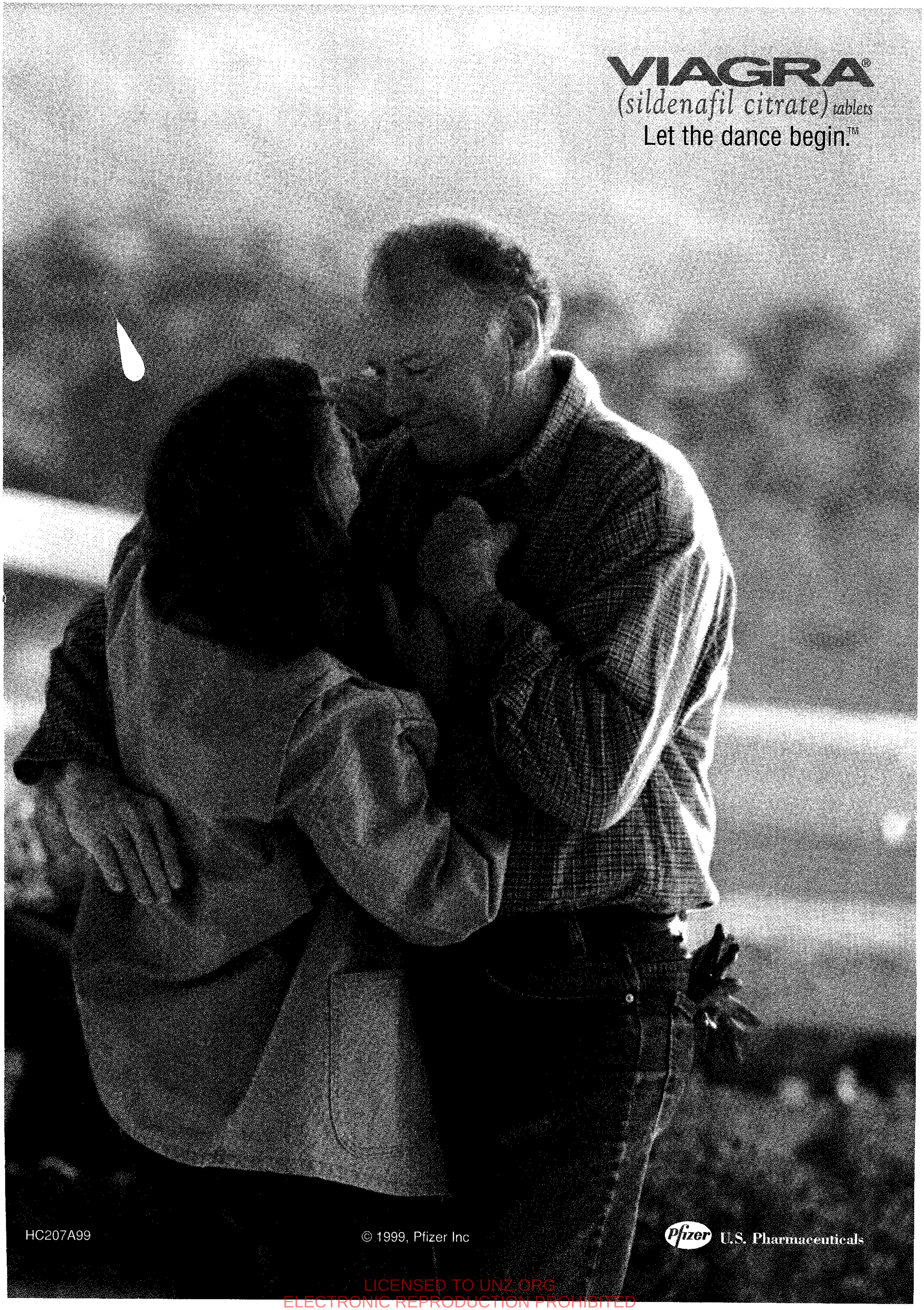
In order to test Ask Jeeves's contention that the Internet butler is not based on Bertie Wooster's valet, we took some dialogue from Wodehouse and tried it out on the Web site:

Bertie Wooster: What is it Shakespeare calls sleep?
Wodehouse Jeeves: Tired Nature's sweet restorer, sir.
Ask Jeeves: Where can I learn about brain mechanisms of sleep?

Bertie Wooster: What do ties matter, Jeeves, at a time like this?
Wodehouse Jeeves: There is no time, sir, at which ties do not matter.
Ask Jeeves: Where can I buy accessories (general) on line?

Bertie Wooster: What do you suppose has happened, Jeeves?
Wodehouse Jeeves: It is difficult to hazard a conjecture, sir.
Ask Jeeves: What if I use Ask Jeeves and still can't find an answer?

—ANDY AARON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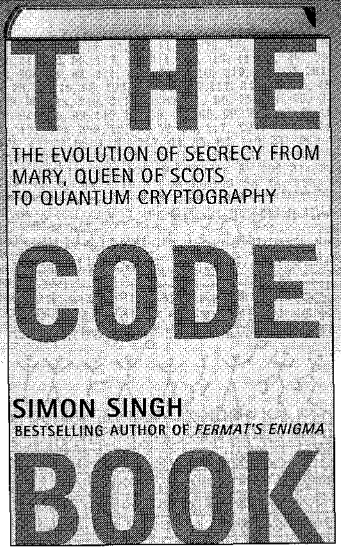

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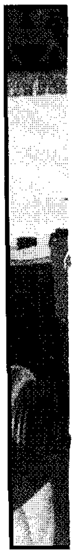
PERSONAL HISTORY

THE FAMILY THAT DISAPPEARED

Sixteen years after the end of Argentina's "dirty war," a man who lost his parents and siblings wins a kind of justice.

BY NOGA TARNOPOLSKY

FOR years, my cousin Daniel was visited by a recurring dream. He is standing in a cemetery. Five hearses roll up the driveway, each bearing a casket containing the corpse of a member of his family—his father and mother, his sister, his brother, and his sister-in-law. Between him and the driveway are five open graves. The caskets are removed from the hearses; the funeral ceremony begins. Daniel observes the traditional Jewish ritual, saying Kaddish over each of the corpses and lowering the coffins into the graves, one by one. Clumps of earth hit the caskets. To Daniel, the sound feels delicious, soothing. At that moment, the dream flashes forward. Now, he's back in the cemetery, at the same spot beside the driveway. This time, he's standing before five tombstones, each of which has engraved on it the name of a family member he has lost: Hugo Abraham Tarnopolsky, Blanca Edelberg de Tarnopolsky, Betina Tarnopolsky, Sergio Tarnopolsky, Laura Del Duca Tarnopolsky.



The junta in 1978: Admiral Massera, center. The Tarnopolsky family in 1976 (wi

"This is an easy dream," Daniel tells me, with a small, ironic smile. "A fantasy more than anything else." We are sitting at his kitchen table in Paris on a balmy April night in 1997. Daniel's wife, Mariana, and their four-year-old son are asleep. We speak quietly so as not to wake them. When Daniel talks, his sentences tend to run long and bunch up against each other, or fade into impenetrable silences. Daniel, who is forty-one, works as a physical and psychological therapist at a Paris hospital. He has a narrow, expressive face, with full, wide lips and thick, dark eyebrows that rise and fall with his speech. When he wants to make sure that I've understood what he's just said, he looks directly at me, holding the stare.

Twenty-three years ago, Daniel's family "disappeared"—the word that has been used to describe what befell an estimated thirty thousand people in Argentina during the years from 1976 to 1983, when the country was ruled by a military junta. Twelve years ago, Daniel filed a civil suit that charged the government of Argentina and two leaders of the junta, Admiral Emilio Massera and Admiral Armando Lambruschini, with the abduction and wrongful deaths of his parents and siblings.

What, precisely, happened to Daniel's family—the bodies have never been found—remains unknown. Argentina has no freedom-of-information act, and the government has refused to open any archives relating to the junta's activities.

In 1994, a federal court ruled in Daniel's favor, but the decision was appealed by the government. Two years later, a higher court supported that decision, but removed Lambruschini as a defendant on the ground that he had not been in power when the kidnappings took place. Again, the government appealed. Finally, on August 31st of this year, Argentina's Supreme Court upheld the ruling, and awarded Daniel the equivalent of one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the cost to be divided between Massera and the Republic of Argentina.

atives who were afraid to be identified), clockwise from top center: Daniel, Luli, Betina, Hugo, Laura, and Sergio. Daniel today.*

DIEGO GOLDBERG/CORBIS SYGMA; COURTESY TARNOPOLSKY FAMILY; LISE SARFATI/MAGNUM

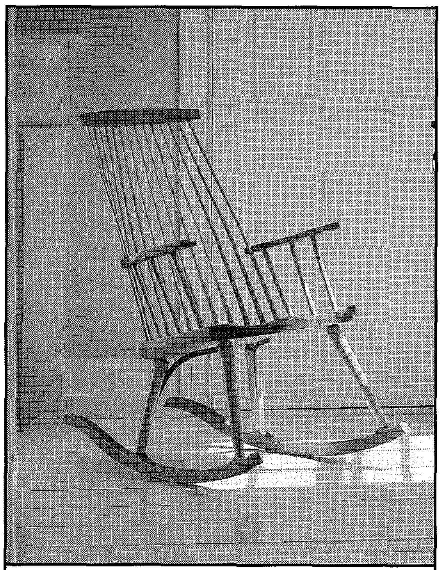
This unprecedented ruling is expected to have broad ramifications in Argentina, and also in other Latin-American countries whose governments have committed similar crimes against their citizens. Irwin Cotler, a professor of law at McGill University who specializes in international human-rights law, says, "This judgment may be seen as the civilian side of the 'Pinochet doctrine' and the Nuremberg legacy. The Pinochet doctrine is that there is no immunity from prosecution for former or sitting heads of state or other senior officials for 'Nuremberg crimes.' The judgment in the Tarnopolsky case now makes it clear that there is no immunity from civil liability for these crimes, and that the Masseras who authorized them must indemnify the victim. In addition, the case establishes that the state is liable to make restitution for criminal conduct carried out under its authority."

For many members of Argentina's middle and upper classes, the military coup of March 24, 1976, came as a relief. After three shaky years during which the country was ruled by a feeble, dying Juan Perón, and then by his marionettish second wife, Isabel, the military takeover brought with it hopes of economic recovery and social stability. During the Perons' last, grotesque stints as President, the Peronist-affiliated Monteneros and another left-wing group, the E.R.P., or Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, had committed a series of violent assaults, including bombings, in which some four hundred people—many of them police and military officers and prominent industrialists—had been killed or seriously injured.

Until the day my uncle, my aunt, and my cousins vanished, they were an energetic, thriving, upper-middle-class family in Buenos Aires. Hugo Tarnopolsky, who was fifty-one in 1976, was one of six partners in Síntesis Química, a company that produced chemicals for agricultural and industrial use. His wife, Blanca (called Luli by friends and family), was forty-eight, and an educational psychologist who specialized in learning disabilities. Small, round-figured, opinionated, and often high-strung, she was a firm believer in what are now called "family values."

Hugo and Luli's elder son, Sergio, who was then twenty-one, was the family rebel. Despite the anti-Peronist views of his parents, who were leftish intellectuals without any formal political affiliation, he was a member of the Peronista Youth. At the time of the disappearances, he was completing his military service at the Navy's School of Mechanics. Daniel was closest to his younger sister, Betina, who was then fifteen. The family baby, she was blond and high-spirited, headstrong, popular in school, and—according to Daniel's memory—"a little bit chubby in a Dutch sort of way." When talk of disappearances began to be heard, Hugo raised the question of leaving Argentina, although he had no specific destination in mind. Betina, especially, opposed the move, and her father, who did not believe in forcing decisions upon his children, dropped the subject.

On the morning of July 14, 1976, Daniel, who had just graduated from high school, with, as he says, "absolutely no idea what the hell to do," was preparing to attend a conference on dance therapy, in which he had a keen interest. Because he was going to be away from home for several days, his mother asked if he needed extra cash. Daniel said no; then, at eight-thirty, he left for the conference. That night, he called his parents, and his father told him that he was expected for dinner at his grandmother's the next evening. At 8 P.M. on July 15th, Daniel again called home to ask whether the dinner plans were still on. Nobody answered. He



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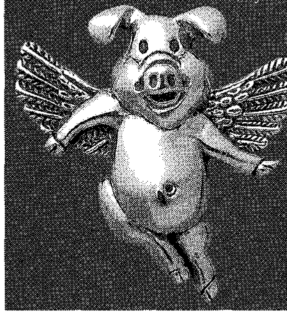

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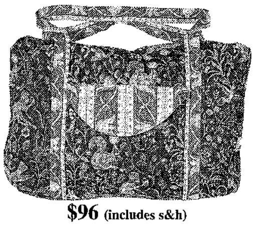

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THE NAME OF THE AIR

It could be like that then the beloved
old dog finding it harder and harder
to breathe and understanding but coming
to ask whether there is something that can
be done about it coming again to
ask and then standing there without asking

—W. S. Merwin

then called his grandmother, Rosa Edelberg. After hearing his voice, she said, "Who is this?"

"Daniel, obviously."

"Where are you?"

"At the home of friends."

"Come over here immediately. I have to talk to you."

"What's going on?"

"Just get over here. We'll talk."

When he got to his grandmother's, she told him that she had been awakened by the doorbell at three in the morning. She had heard Daniel's father, Hugo, calling out, "Open up, it's me." He was standing at her door, wearing only pajamas and slippers, and he was surrounded by a group of men in civilian clothes who demanded to know where they could find Betina. As it happened, Betina was asleep at her grandmother's, in a spare room that she and Daniel frequently used as a crash pad. The men woke Betina up by throwing a glass of water in her face, and took her with them, in her nightclothes. Rosa, who was seventy-two, was unharmed.

Rosa tried unsuccessfully to phone her daughter, Hugo's wife, Blanca. At daybreak, she took a cab to Palermo, a stylish residential neighborhood, to the building where Daniel's family lived. Their apartment was on the ground floor, off the building's elegant marble lobby. Where there had been a door, Rosa found a gaping hole and, beyond it, debris and disarray. The doorman told her that at about one o'clock in the morning a group of armed men had come looking for the Tarnopolskys. After he pointed out their apartment, the men had asked him to leave the area because they wanted to plant a bomb. They then set off an explosive device so powerful that it blew out the lobby's plate-glass windows. Soon afterward, the doorman heard shrieks.

Rosa went to the local police station and filed a complaint stating that a group of men who claimed to belong to the "security service" had kidnapped her granddaughter, her daughter, and her son-in-law. Later that morning, she received an agitated call from Raquel Del Duca, whose daughter Laura had recently married Daniel's older brother, Sergio. Mrs. Del Duca had a similar story to tell: unidentified men had come to her house during the night, and had taken Laura, who was staying there while Sergio was in military service at the Naval academy. (Sergio, as it turned out, had also been abducted that night.)

"The first thing I did when I heard what happened was to burn my address book, right there in my grandmother's kitchen," Daniel tells me. "By this point, we'd heard enough to know that they got you by going through the address books of people who had already been kidnapped, and I didn't know what was going to happen next. After I left my grandmother's, I went back to the house of the friends I'd stayed with the night before and told them what had happened. They said, 'O.K., you can sleep here tonight, but tomorrow leave.' "

I ask Daniel if he ever reconnected with the friends who wouldn't let him stay for more than a night. He smiles, then says, "We're actually in touch. They're friends—I'd even say they're good friends. Look, they protected themselves. I wasn't in a position to demand anything from anybody. Some people wanted to help, and some didn't, and, from that moment on, I could respond only to those who did." I realize that, over the years, Daniel's self-restraint has become a kind of armor, a tightly wound defense against any sentimentality that might distort what little

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he knows of his family's disappearance.

Daniel tells me that, even though he hasn't seen his father for more than twenty years, he still finds himself in an ongoing dialogue with him. “Many times, I've asked my dad for help,” he says. “When things go well, I think he helps me; when things go badly, I curse him for not helping me.” Hugo Tarnopolsky was a multifaceted man whose interests, ranging far beyond business matters, included French literature, science fiction, and yoga, which he practiced with dedication. Pablo García Reinoso, an old family friend, has a vivid memory of Hugo: “He would tilt his head over to rest his pipe in his hand as he listened to you, and nod. He radiated light. There was something tender in him, and you could see this in his home, which was filled with life.”

I am haunted by the figure of Hugo leading the police to his daughter. I wonder what was going through his mind. Daniel believes that his parents were tortured even before they were taken from their home. He ventures a guess: maybe Hugo was not himself when he arrived at Rosa's door with the kidnappers. I suggest another scenario: maybe Hugo thought that, just by being with Betina, he—her father—could protect her. Daniel shakes his head. It's unclear whether he agrees, disagrees, or simply can't think about it.

The only subject that provokes anger in Daniel's voice is Betina. “It's one of the things I will never understand,” he says. “What the hell could a fifteen-year-old girl have done for them to seek her out so viciously? What I have always wanted is for someone to come forward and say, ‘We kidnapped your parents because of X reason. Your mother had to die for Y reason. Your fifteen-year-old sister had to die for . . .’ But they are incapable of admitting that. They killed for killing's sake—like mad dogs going after their prey.”

I WAS ten years old and living with my parents in Geneva, Switzerland, when these events took place, and my memories are the diaphanous yet excruciatingly precise memories of a child. There was a flurry of phone calls; then my father telling my mother that no one knew where Hugo, his cousin, was. One afternoon, while my parents napped, my eyes fell upon a line in the *International Herald Tribune*, which had been left on the couch in our living room. In a back-page column, the governor of the province of Buenos Aires, General Ibérico Saint Jean, was quoted as saying, “First, we will kill all the subversives; then we will kill their collaborators; then their sympathizers; then . . . those who remain indifferent; and finally we will kill the timid.”

Daniel found refuge for a few days at the home of a friend of his parents, Chiquito Serebrennik. Then he hid in a house in Martinez, a suburb of Buenos Aires—terrified and uncertain about whether to “go underground” or to leave the country. After a month of this “semi-clandestine” existence—he was receiving financial assistance from his father's business partners—he decided to leave Argentina, fearing that the danger to him and to those who were helping him was too great. First he flew to Chile, then he went to Israel for a few months. Eventually, he became a refugee in France.

Daniel and I stumble all over ourselves when we try to talk about his “years of exile,” from 1976 to 1984, caught by the linguistic distortions that were used by the junta and its officers to sugarcoat their actions: Argentina's years of military rule became *el proceso*, a benign abbreviation of Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization), which is how the junta referred to its rule. The term “dirty war” was coined by the military, which used it to explain away the murders, as though there had been an actual war, with two sides. What happened to Daniel's family we inevitably refer to as *desaparición*.

During the first few years of Daniel's exile, no one really knew what was meant by “disappear.” Occasionally, bits of information would float out of Argentina, incomplete and dire. Among the Argentinean exiles, accounts of torture circulated, some of them appalling—live rats placed in women's vaginas, for example—but no one believed that every *desaparecido* was actually dead. One woman, who was imprisoned in the Navy's School of Mechanics, and who

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later escaped, told of having met, in August, 1976, a teen-age girl who introduced herself as Betina Tarnopolsky and who said that her entire family was incarcerated there. The woman reported that Betina had been tortured by electric shocks, which left her with a dry, tormenting thirst. She had asked for and received water, which only aggravated her agony. Over the years, two other women who had made it out of the same clandestine prison reported that Sergio had starred in a movie that was being shown to other prisoners, in which he "confessed" to having placed a bomb at the naval base.

I wonder whether Hugo and Luli ever dared to hope that their younger son, Daniel, was safe. Daniel thinks not. "Look, I never had any more contact with them, so they couldn't know a thing about me," he says. "They never knew what happened, or where I was. I suppose it was evident that I wasn't there, but I have no idea what they thought. I know a lot more about what happened to them than they ever knew about me. Unless they see me from above."

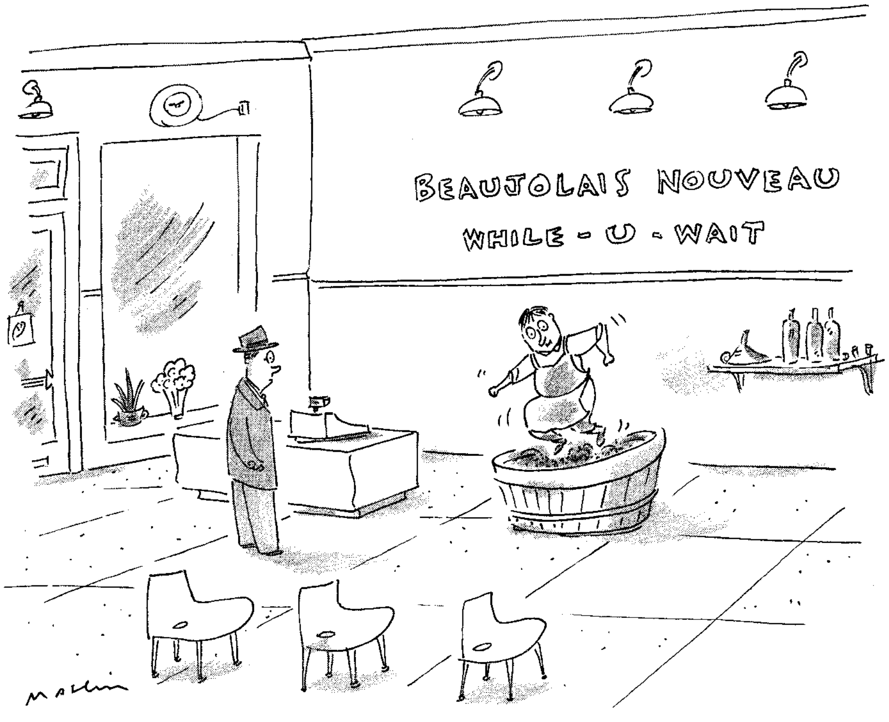
I ask him, "Are you a believer?"

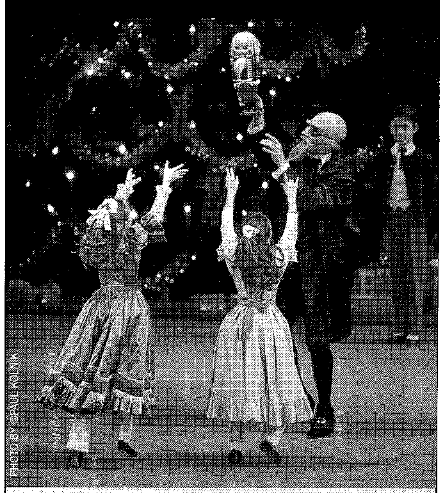
Daniel replies, "I ended up believing in an afterlife—perhaps just because of my longing for some contact with them. But who knows? I believe—I *hope*—that life continues after death. That is the illusion I live with."

In the late seventies, Daniel tried to draw international attention to his family's disappearance. He flew to capitals all over Europe to meet with any foreign minister who would see him. They listened to him blankly, he says, and nothing came of his appeals. Even the other Argentinean exiles who had lost family members were, for the most part, unable to share his sense of urgency. Although Daniel cannot explain their reaction, I suspect that they were simply dumbstruck by the magnitude of his loss.

Daniel says that he never really thought about how he was seen by other people. Then he concedes that it may not be coincidental that his closest friend among the exiles was a woman who was about the same age as his mother and had lost all three of her children.

In his memoir, "Literature or Life," Jorge Semprun, Spain's former Minister of Culture and a survivor of the Nazi death camps, describes what he calls "the gaze," in reference to the gawking of two young soldiers who were the first people to see him after his liberation from Buchenwald. He writes, "They stand amazed before me, and suddenly, in that terror-stricken gaze, I see myself—in their horror. . . . They stare at me, wild-eyed with panic." I ask Daniel if people looked at him that way. "I have no idea," he says. But a longtime friend of his in Paris, Pierre Cappanera, remembers moments when Daniel was "supernervous, fidgety, too voluble, doubted everything." Cappanera adds, "For me, he was a survivor of the Holocaust. I

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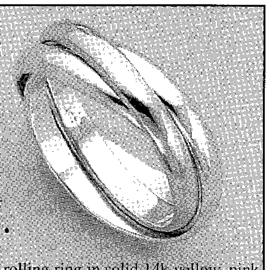
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"When I actually was this age, I didn't have much facial expression anyway."

read Elie Wiesel to try to understand him better. I was faced with incomprehension—*l'horreur absolue*."

In late 1976, Daniel came to Geneva on a visit. One day, I returned home from school to find him sitting on my bed, convulsed by a racking seizure that seemed to have taken possession of his whole body. I stood and stared at him, but it was as though I didn't exist. Daniel's eyes were closed, his face was contorted. He sat shaking, and wailing noiselessly. I never told anyone about what I had seen.

Twenty years later, I ask Daniel if he remembers that moment. No, he replies, but he recognizes the affliction. He tells me that he suffered from sudden, uncontrollable paroxysms for many years. He had always thought that no one had ever seen him in that state.

By 1983, after seven years in power, the Argentinean junta had failed on every count. The economy was in shambles; the Falklands adventure had ended in national humiliation; pleas by human-rights groups for economic sanctions were taking effect. After Argentina's military defeat by Britain, the government had no choice but to call for elections. Raúl Alfonsín, the chairman of the social-democratic Radical Party, was elected President. In Paris, a jubilant Daniel packed his bags and headed home. For a while, he worked at his father's old firm. One day, a friend of Betina's named Mariana called him up. They met at a café, and married within the year.

In early 1985, Argentina's democratic government took the extraordinary step of putting its own military on public trial for crimes against humanity. In court, the lawyer for one of the principal defendants, Admiral Lambruschini, testified that the Tarnopolsky family had been sequestered because Sergio was suspected of planting a bomb at the Navy's School of Mechanics. No evidence of such a plot was produced. Lambruschini's predecessor in the junta, Admiral Massera, was found guilty of three premeditated murders, sixty-nine kidnappings, and twelve instances of torture; he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Lambruschini was sentenced to eight years in prison for thirty-three kidnappings and ten instances of torture. For Daniel, these convictions represented hope for a "good" Argentina.

Daniel and Mariana moved into an apartment not far from the neighborhood in which he had grown up, and together they began what Daniel called "my new/old life." To this day, Daniel says that Buenos Aires is the only place where he feels "whole." He installed a simple plaque engraved with the names of his five missing family members in the Jewish section of the British cemetery in Buenos Aires. (He reminds me that tombstones—like the ones in his dream—are prohibited by Jewish law in cases where there are no bodies.)

Life proceeded evenly for Daniel and Mariana until Easter week, 1987, when an Army colonel, Aldo Rico, attempted a coup d'état. The turmoil gave rise, on Easter Sunday, to the largest pro-democracy demonstration in Argentina's history. Daniel and Mariana were among the crowd in the Plaza de Mayo when President Alfonsín emerged on the Presidential balcony to say, "*Felices Pascuas. La casa está en orden.*" ("Happy Easter. The house is in order.") At that moment, Daniel realized that a deal had been cut with the military. Turning to his wife, he said, "We can't live here." Mariana, who is a reserved, sophisticated woman, recalls, "He seemed to be affected physically. He was rigid. I knew that there would be no way to relieve his anxiety or to convince him that there was something worth staying for in Argentina. At least, no honest way."

The next day, Daniel was in a bank, standing in line at a teller's window, when he overheard one of the clerks complaining about what a "shitty weekend" it had been because the football coverage on television had been cancelled. "Nobody in Argentina realized that we had almost lost democracy and civil rights," he tells me. "People simply didn't give a damn. It felt like my parents' lives had been squandered—that their existence in Argentina, and now mine, was being mocked."

During the next three years, increasing fears of a coup attempt prompted a series of amnesties and pardons that eventually freed all of the junta's officers who had been convicted of crimes. First came the "full stop" law—Alfonsín's attempt at "national reconciliation," which held that after February 23, 1987, no more claims of human-rights abuses against junta members would be heard by the courts. This was followed, in May, by the "law of due obedience," which absolved all soldiers and officers under the rank of lieutenant-colonel of any responsibility for crimes they might have committed. After another attempted coup, the Radical Party candidate in the 1989 Presidential election, Eduardo Angeloz, was defeated by the leader of the Peronist Party, Carlos Saúl Menem. The following year, Menem, who had been an outspoken opponent of these reprieves when he was running for office, pardoned and freed more than two hundred officers who had already been convicted. Massera was among them, having served five years of his life sentence. Lambruschini, who had served six years of his eight-year sentence, was also freed.

Daniel and Mariana left Argentina. "I felt that my parents had been killed a second time, and that if I stayed there, in a society that denied the existence of the dead, I would lose my mind," he says. By then, he had acquired French citizenship and a diploma from the University of Paris. He sold his parents' apartment, which he had been able to reclaim as abandoned property, and used the money to buy an apartment in Paris. In 1993, his son was born; two years ago, he and Mariana had a daughter.

In 1997, during a conversation I had in Jerusalem with Marcos Aguinis, the Argentinean novelist who served as Alfonsín's Minister of Culture, Aguinis

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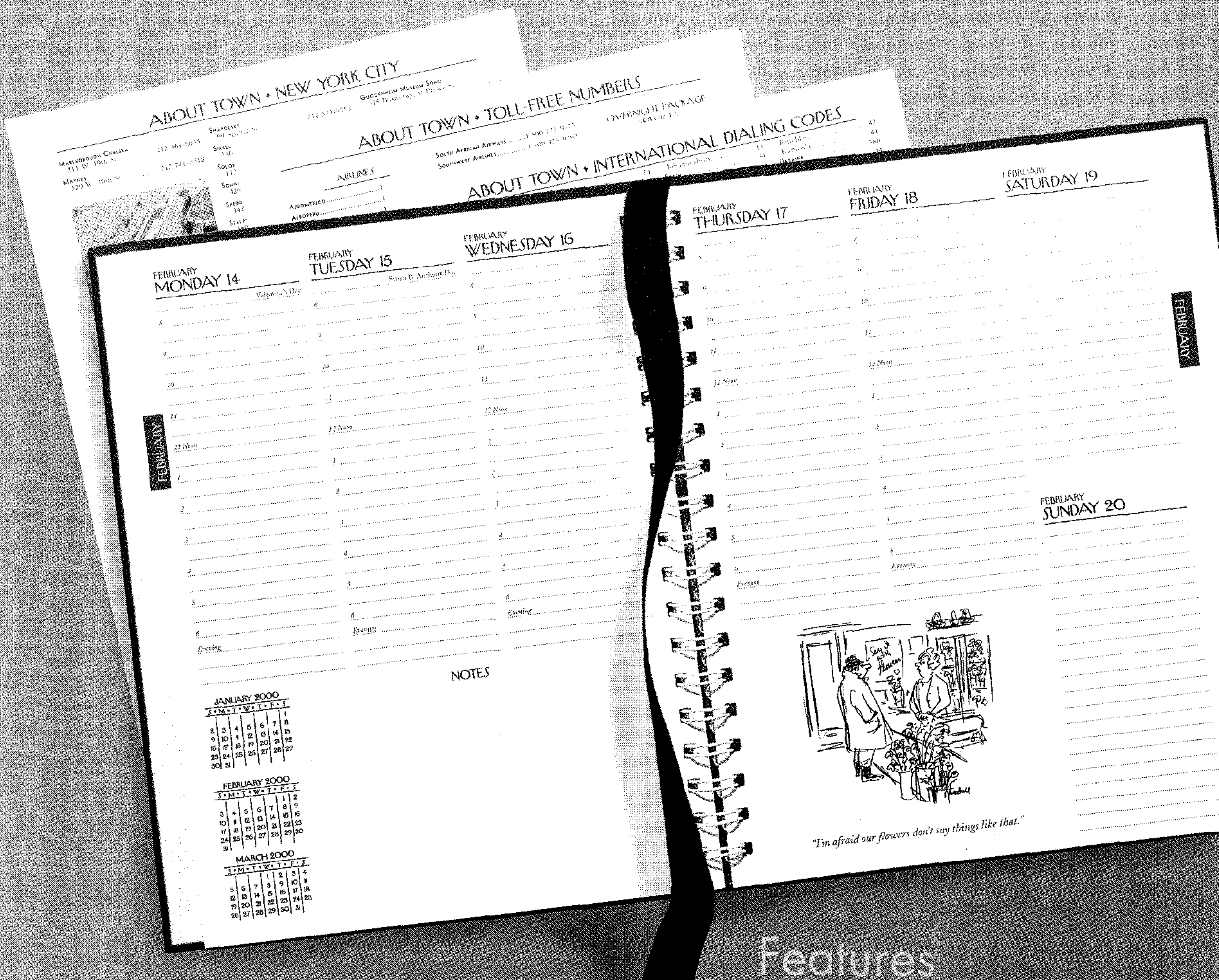
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attributed his country's habit of civic forgetfulness to "a nefarious South American tradition dating back to the time of the Spanish colony, consisting of making a mockery of the law, considering justice something to be manipulated or to profane, and a belief that immediate consequences are more important than a systematic and permanent legal tradition."

As my father puts it, "The critical thing to understand is that Argentineans, even when they accomplish something of importance, don't realize it. Bringing the generals to justice was a feat of historical proportions, but then the Argentineans revealed their inability to understand the meaning of what they had done, and they undid it. So the generals were personally discredited, but you have dozens of torturers and kidnappers roaming the streets. Since the disappearance of Hugo, every time I've had to go back to Argentina, I grit my teeth."

To date, there has been no recorded instance involving a violent act of revenge by any of the junta's victims. When I ask Daniel why this is so, he says, simply, "Because we are not like them." I ask if he has ever fantasized about revenge. "Oh, yes!" he replies. "About Massera I dreamed up magnificent scenarios where I'm walking along the street, just like they do on TV, with a gun and a silencer. I approach Massera and say, 'Good day.' He looks at me strangely and asks who I am. I say, 'You killed my parents and my siblings,' and, with that, I wipe him out on the spot. For me, this will end only when they are all dead—Massera, Lambruschini, the others. Then it will begin to dissipate. The only thing that must last is memory—national memory—and, if I win my lawsuit, memory wins."

In the civil suit that Daniel filed in 1987 for damages against Massera, Lambruschini, and the Republic of Argentina, he was represented by Betina Stein, a tenacious twenty-seven-year-old attorney who had only recently graduated from law school. When she filed the suit, the term *desaparecido* did not exist in the Argentinean legal code. "Homicide existed," Stein says. "Extortive kidnapping existed. But not 'disappearance.' " Stein's belief in Daniel's case was such that, against the advice of her colleagues, she stayed with it—unpaid—for twelve years.

In November, 1994, a federal judge in Buenos Aires, Oscar Garzón Funes, delivered a judgment that was unprecedented in Argentine legal history. His ruling granted Daniel the "symbolic" amount of a million dollars, to be paid in equal parts by all three co-defendants—Massera, Lambruschini, and the government. In his decision, Judge Garzón Funes wrote that "[the amnesties] in no way alter the obligation to repair the consequences of the crime, all the more so since the victimizers held power illegally. . . . Massera and Lambruschini were the incarnation of a despotic, lawless state that subverted the customs and morals of the people. Democracy must compensate for the crimes of these individuals, and it is fitting that the State itself pay some of the reparations."

President Menem accused the judge of overstepping his judicial authority and announced the government's intention to appeal. Garzón Funes responded to Menem's attacks with an uncompromising explanation of his ruling: "[It] is based on only one thing: the defense of the right to live." Menem then passed, by Presidential decree, the "law of indemnification." A statute designed to prevent copycat lawsuits, it set the amount of damages a survivor could claim on a "disappeared" relative at two hundred and twenty thousand dollars.

Daniel's case, which was tied up in the government's appeals, took five more years to settle. Finally, on the night of August 31st, he called me.

"Are you sitting down?" he said.

"Yes."

"We won the lawsuit!"

A few days after the ruling, Daniel flew to Argentina to be present when the Supreme Court's decision was made public. A few days later, he held a ceremony at the British cemetery, where the plaque in his family's memory stands. Holding hands with Betina Stein, weeping, he addressed his vanished parents: "I have done everything I could for you. My wife and children couldn't be here today, but they are with me. I speak to my children ceaselessly about you. I hope my cousins, and their uncles and aunts, will tell them what you were like, what you liked, what you hated. I still cannot absorb what happened, and for me the worst pain comes from what they did to Betina, who hadn't yet begun to live." ♦

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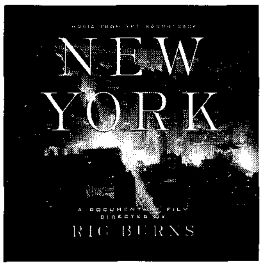

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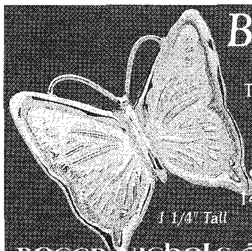

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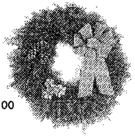

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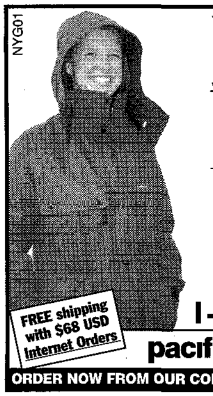
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PREFACE TO MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY STEVE MARTIN

TWELVE years ago, I was given complete access to myself in order to write an autobiography, and after those dozen years of research, interviews, and personal introspection, I realized that no one was there. I thus decided to invent a character who would be my friend, whose eyes I would be seen through, and who would relate my personality through fictional encounters with myself. I have given this fictionalized narrator the name of Strove Mortman, whom I shall refer to as a he/she. I found it beneficial to have a male narrator when discussing my muscles, my business perspicacity, and my toughness, and a female narrator when discussing my physical appearance, my seductive glances, and my tenderness. I gave him/her the name Strove because it is both masculine and feminine—Strove McCarthy, Irish tenor (1912-63), and Strove Bandolini, Italian lesbian poet (1612-1725)—and the name Mortman because of what it spells backward.

ISTVAN BANYAI

I naturally would like to come off as interesting as possible, so several events in this book have also been made up. My high-school football record as reported is not actually mine but a combination of random numbers over one hundred, separated by the words "touchdown" and "per." The admiring comments made in the stands by adoring fans during a fabricated game are a pastiche of the compliments paid to Pope Clement VIII by Galileo, in 1605. The descriptions of my sexual prowess are measurements taken from Michelangelo's David, and multiplied by 1.25.

Other fictionalized accounts, related not to fool the reader but to illustrate various aspects of my character, include the single-handed asphalting of a two-mile stretch of Sunset Boulevard, the shunning of the Nobel Prize for my work in gene therapy, and the impregnation of infertile housewives with the tacit approval of their grateful husbands.

Although I am positive that I have had children, I have been unable to find them, or any evidence that they ever existed. This may be a mind game someone is playing on me, but I have a distinct memory of being the father of a bride. I will address this issue in further volumes.

For the sake of dramatic action, certain discrete events have been compressed into one event, particularly in the area of retorts and bons mots. It will often—in fact, always—appear that my comeback was uttered at the moment of insult. In some cases, however, up to three years had passed before I uttered my riposte, which originated not with me but was the brainchild of a team of highly paid writers.

I have exaggerated, for purposes of narrative flow, my involvement in certain charities. This shows my deep concern for those less fortunate than I, although this concern has never translated into any overt action. I have, however, assisted many individuals who fall outside the scope of major benevolent organizations, by offering advice such as "Get a job" and "Your illness is all in your head."

It is interesting to note that my eight years spent at Yale were not entered into the records, or, worse, were mysteriously deleted from them by a sinister hand. Somehow, these records were transferred to Santa Ana Junior College, in California, with a lowered grade-point average. Also, it was worrisome to discover that my high-school yearbook photo had been tampered with, causing me to look like a nerd who could not have lost his virginity until the sad age of twenty-two.

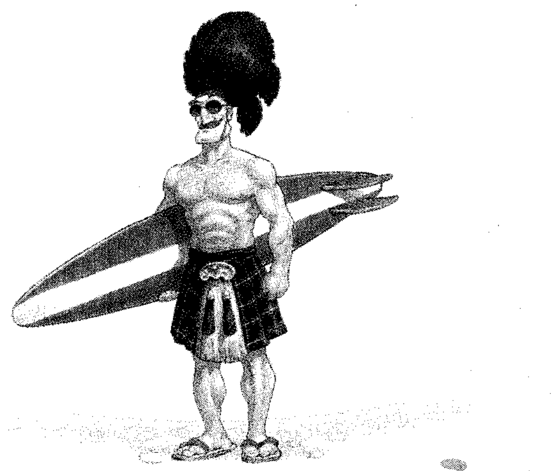
I was given free access to my psychiatrist's notes, or at least the notes he left on his desk when he excused himself for a brief moment "to get some caffeine." These notes offered interesting insights into me from an objective third party, whom I pay. I quote a few of them here:

"... a dream so dull it actually could have happened."

"Pick up cream rinse."

[various doodles]

I have several people to acknowledge for their contributions to this autobiography. I wish to thank my editor, whose comment "I read it" washed away all self-doubt and motivated me to keep writing. I thank my ex-wife, Delores, whose wise counsel—"There better not be one negative word about me in there or I'll let the world know about your free-basing with Liberace"—prompted a reëxamination of our marriage that made me recognize that those were idyllic years. And, finally, I wish to thank the Greek poet Homer, for without his Iliad I would have been at a loss to put into words certain of my exploits during Desert Storm. ♦



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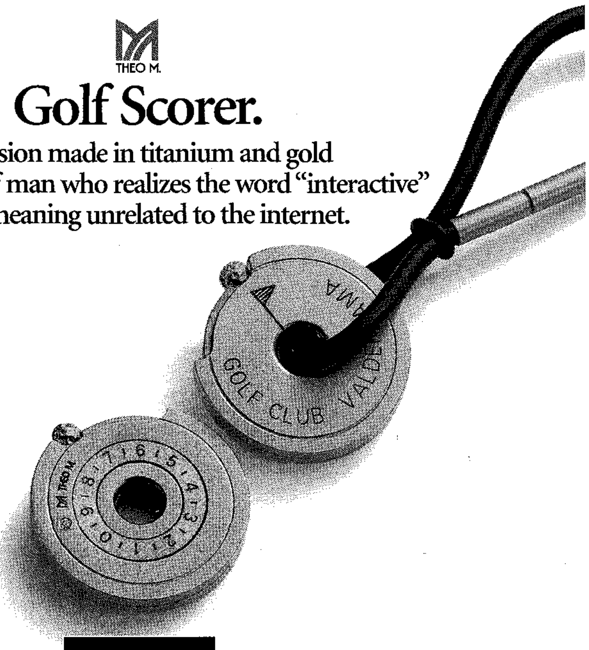

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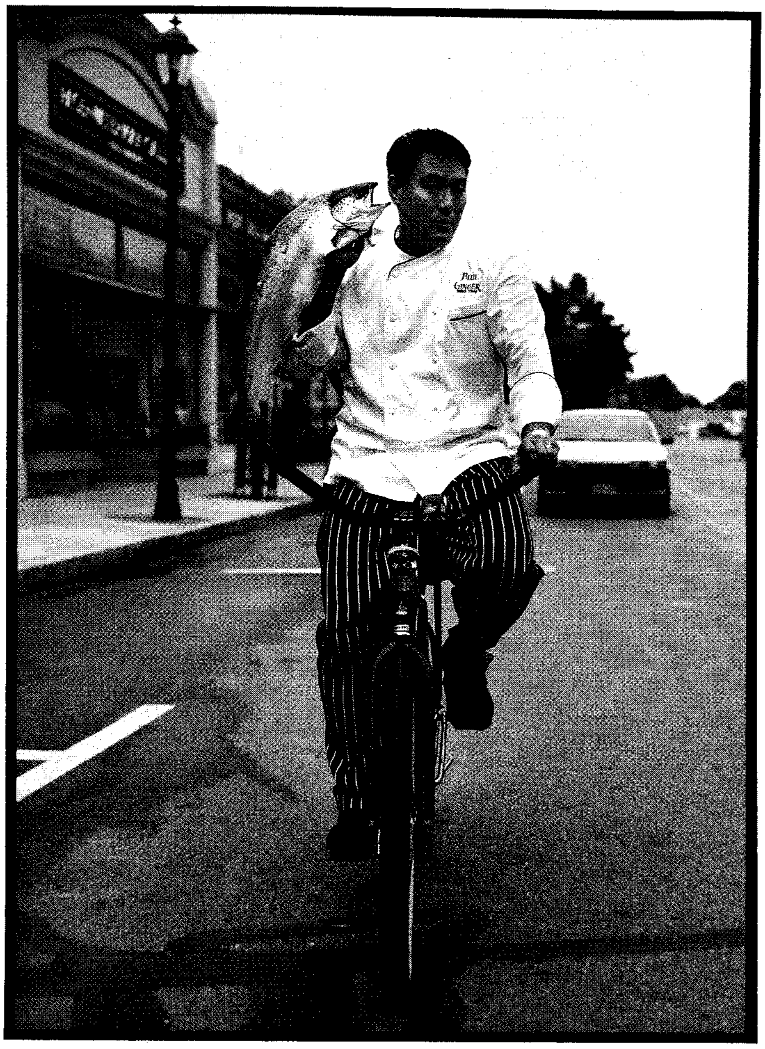
PROFILE

MING'S THING

How to become a celebrity chef.

BY LIESL SCHILLINGER

MING TSAI is a muscular, six-foot-tall Chinese-American guy who looks like no other chef you've ever seen. He wears short-sleeved knit shirts that strain at his shoulders, and when he grabs the handle of a heavy pan he could be an athlete reaching for a racquet. The opening sequence of his cooking show, "East Meets West with Ming Tsai," which airs several times a day on the Food Network, looks at first glance like a self-improvement infomercial, or maybe a Visa ad. A gong shimmers, and Ming Tsai appears: serene, massive, and svelte, dressed in a white tunic, and sitting cross-legged in a yoga pose. As he leans into a respectful bow, the picture dissolves to a squash court, where, reclothed in tennis whites, he lunges across the wood floor, pounding the ball. The next second, he's brandishing a flaming wok, then he's shopping for duck, then he's hopping out of an S.U.V. with a panting Border collie in the back, then he's bicycling, then he's shopping for snap peas, French bread, and vine-ripened tomatoes, then he's clowning for the camera. And then, all at once, he's in the tunic again, smiling as he comes out of his yoga bow. After the bow—*whoosh!*—he's in cooking clothes (knit shirt, black pants, and neat half apron) announcing, in the most unpretentious manner imaginable, the carte du jour.



Ming Tsai, a Midwesterner born into the Chinese tradition and trained in the French, is no food snob, but he is a perfectionist.

MARC ROYCE

If you close your eyes and listen as Ming walks through a recipe, his patter sounds like sports commentary. In one of his most popular episodes, in which he teaches Americans to conquer their fear of sushi, he begins, "I'm sure all of ya have eaten sushi, and have blown your head off when ya've eaten too much wasabi paste, and—bang!—your head is, like, screamin'. Well," he says jocularly—as, indeed, he says everything that he says, "this is kinda the tamer version." He checks the camera to make sure everyone's still with him, and throws together his wasabi oil, unhurriedly shaking a heap of pale-green Japanese horseradish into a bowl, sweetening it with mirin (sweet sake) and sugar, then blunting it with canola oil. His giant forearm leans gently toward the bowl, and within seconds he has whipped the wasabi into a smooth emulsion. "This ya can eat, and it's not gonna blow your head off," he says. He has already made some vinegary-sweet sticky rice, telling the story along the way of Kobayashi, the Japanese sushi master who taught him, in Osaka, to keep all the moist rice clumped together, without letting a single grain go astray. ("If a rice gets lonely, it will die.") He deposits a mound of rice on some seaweed, and then, so that nobody in Omaha tunes out, he lays down a strip of smoked salmon instead of a glistening jelly glob of fish roe. "There's no raw fish goin' on here," Ming promises. "I'm sure a lot of you have had smoked salmon with bagels, or a smoked-salmon sandwich—same old thing."

Ming's common touch with sushi was one of the factors that led the Food Network to give him a show in the first place. It demonstrates what the network's head of programming and production, Eileen Opatut, calls his "ability to communicate, on a very populist level, information that's actually pretty exotic." It was Opatut who authorized "East Meets West," in the summer of 1998, but the network had known Ming long before he got his show. Four years ago, an executive producer named Marilyn O'Reilly was looking for chefs to participate in "Ready . . . Set . . . Cook!"—a program that pits one chef against another in a timed cook-off—when she saw a clip of Ming in action at Santacafé, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he was the executive chef. She told her boss to watch him: "I said, 'You know what? This man makes it look so easy! I feel like *I* could make sushi after watching him!' " Ming's friend and producer Julia Harrison puts it another way: "He really knows food, but he's not a snooty foodie."

Ming's down-to-earth, frat-boy charm draws more than a thousand fan E-mails every month from men, women, and even kids. (Newspaper articles have noted that, curiously, young children seem to enjoy watching him, in the same way they enjoy watching Barney.) Fans ask not only where they can get his recipes but where they can get his shirts. One groupie in Hawaii began her letter in a moderate tone, praising his "creative" cooking, but ended, besottedly, "You're a total babe!!!!!" Asian-Americans who write to Ming say they appreciate that he doesn't act stereotypically Asian—unlike, say, his colleague Martin Yan, who exaggerates his Chinese accent for comic effect on his show, "Yan Can Cook."

Many people, especially chefs, ask Ming how he came to have his own show, and he is happy to break down the steps of his self-creation. It was all part of a game plan, he says—one that took him from the tennis courts of Dayton, Ohio, to the squash courts of Phillips Academy, in Andover, Massachusetts, and from there to the squash courts of Yale, and, eventually, to Cornell's celebrity-chef boot camp.

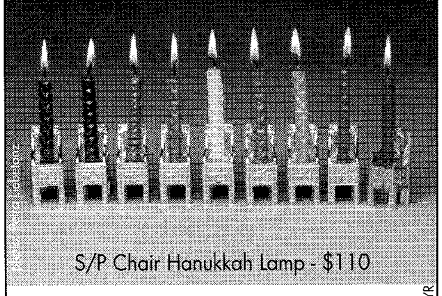
MING is first-generation American but third-generation Yale. His grandfather came to New Haven from Changsha, in Hunan Province, in 1917, and got a degree at Yale in economics—he shovelled coal to earn his board—before returning to China. Three decades later, he sent his son, Steve, to Yale, where he got an engineering degree and married a young woman named Iris Lee, whose parents taught Mandarin Chinese at the college. Steve Tsai later worked as a composite-materials engineer at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, near Dayton, and Iris Tsai taught occasional classes in Chinese cooking. They brought up two sons in the comfortable suburbs of Dayton, and taught them to be proud of their Chinese heritage. The family travelled extensively—to France, to the Netherlands, to Taiwan and China. In China, Ming and his brother, dressed in down coats, were startled to find themselves treated as foreigners. "We really stood out," he says. "And when they found out I spoke Chinese, that really threw them off. To them, I looked American."

Ming grew up cooking at his mother's side. Old snapshots of him flash on the screen between commercial breaks on "East Meets West," and prove that, as he is fond of saying, he has always been a "big eater." He was a plump kid, and in his first experiments with cooking he tried to be health-conscious; he made cakes with frosting for his brother, plain cakes for himself. Once the boys were out of grade school, Iris Tsai opened a restaurant called Mandarin Kitchen in the food court of a small shopping center in Dayton, and in his teens Ming worked there during the summer, managing the kitchen and selling eggrolls from a hot cart outside the mall. In 1979, when he was fifteen, he left home for Andover.

Naturally, Ming's parents wanted him to carry on the Yale tradition, but he wasn't much of a student. Ming's father came up with a strategy—"The winning team always has a game plan," he likes to say—and that strategy was squash. Ming had been a strong tennis player in Dayton, and at Andover he made the varsity squash team within months. By his senior year, he was the school's No. 1 player, and Yale wanted him despite his lacklustre grades. "Once I got in, I thought, My God, I can relax!" Ming says. "As far as I was concerned, a D was for 'Diploma.' " He studied mechanical engineering but devoted himself to squash—practicing three hours every day—and also occupied himself with photography and film courses, the D.K.E. fraternity, and bongo lessons.

In the winter of his junior year at Yale, as Ming was answering a question on a dynamics exam concerning the angular acceleration of a spot on a disk on a pencil on a moving turntable, he suddenly decided that he didn't want to be an engineer. The following summer, he went to Paris and turned his attention to cooking. He enrolled in some courses at the Cordon Bleu, studied French, and found a job working the morning shift at a bakery. He would cycle from work to class with baguettes clipped to the back of his bike. At Yale the next fall, he tried out dessert recipes on Dave Talbott, his squash coach, who was by that time a close friend. The coach had

Hanukkah!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"We've got kind of a noir thing happening here, Manny. The girlie cigarette doesn't exactly add."

a little sister named Polly, a petite, pale blonde who happened to be studying Chinese, and when she visited Yale Talbott teased Ming, "You stay away from my sister!" In 1995, Ming and Polly were married.

Ming went back to Paris after graduation and worked as a pastry cook at Fauchon, a decadent delicatessen, and as a sous-chef at a stylish bistro called Natacha, where he sprang his first East-West inventions on daring *dîneurs.* "I went to Chinatown, in the Treizième, and I got five spice"—a blend of cinnamon, fennel, clove, star anise, and Szechuan peppercorn—"fermented black beans, soy sauce, and Chinese black vinegar," he recalls. "They had a stuffed-sole dish that was served with pilaf. I said, 'Let's do a garlic-chive fried rice instead.' So I did that, and then, for the sole, instead of a beurre blanc I did a beurre rouge, using red wine, butter, fermented black beans, and garlic and ginger, and it was a big hit." A year later, in the United States, he entered Cornell's hotel-management school, so that he could learn the mechanics of putting together successful business plans and running a profitable food operation. In 1992, he got his first American sous-chef job, at Silks, in San Francisco, working with Ken Hom, who is known as "the godfather of East-West cooking," and Kenneth Oringer, who is now the owner and executive chef of Clio, a contemporary-French restaurant in Boston.

Ming had an edge on most of the other young chefs who had begun to dabble in Asian fusion—or Asian "confusion," as he calls it—in the early nineties. Most chefs had a Western cooking background, and tried to graft unfamiliar Asian techniques and ingredients onto their cuisine. Ming was born into the Chinese tradition and was thoroughly trained in the French. Hom, who is fifty and is the author of seventeen cookbooks, was, like Ming, raised in Middle America. He, too, speaks fluent French; he, too, is strikingly good-looking. Yet Ming, Hom says, is more widely known after one year on TV than Hom is after twenty years of cooking. (Last week, Ming accepted a regular spot on CBS's new "Early Show," with Bryant Gumbel and Jane Clayson.) "I think Ming is the right person at the right time, doing the right thing," Hom says. Ming gives more tangible reasons; they have to do with his game plan. "No. 1," Ming says, "there wasn't a Food Network twenty years ago. The Food Network's this new phenomenon of the last six years, which plays your shows every day. Another is this new celebrity-chef thing." And, he adds, "Ken Hom never had a restaurant. If you don't have a restaurant, no one can go see you, and no one can try your food."

IN the center of Wellesley, Massachusetts, brick crosswalks and curling lampposts border a Revolutionary cemetery, which is surrounded by a string of sedate boutiques selling wedding gowns and evening wear, boiled-wool jackets, jewelry, flowers, china, silver, and floral quilted bags. The over-all effect is of a retirement community for newlyweds. There, in February of 1998, Ming and Polly opened the restaurant Blue Ginger, where Ming continued combining the flavors of the East—lime juice and sesame, rice wine and Chinese black vinegar, chilies, soy, and five spice—with the butter-loving science of French cuisine. At first, old ladies would wander in, ask for egg-drop soup, and wander out, befuddled, when Ming responded, "I know how to make egg-drop soup, but it's not on the menu," and suggested that they try his miso-sake-marinated Chilean sea bass with wasabi oil and soy syrup instead. But the people of Wellesley soon caught on, and within months the Boston *Globe* had given the restaurant three stars, and *Esquire* named Ming the best new chef of 1998. "We're kind of a mom-and-pop thing," he says, professing surprise at his success. "We didn't have partnerships, and we didn't have designers and an eight-million-dollar budget." (He did, however, hit up generous squash buddies and loyal relatives for funding.)

Before choosing Wellesley, Ming and Polly had researched the market. "I went on the Web and did my quick Internet demographics of this area," he says. "And within a ten-mile radius of Blue Ginger there are two hundred thousand people with an average median income of ninety thousand dollars, and the average house is valued at, like, three hundred thousand dollars. It's just ridiculous numbers." He had known that Wellesley could support a restaurant, but he didn't know whether it would support his. "I was a little gun-shy, because of my food being different," he recalls. Nevertheless, he and Polly risked every penny they had on the venture.

Ming and Polly designed Blue Ginger themselves, partly to save money but also because they had a vivid picture of how they wanted it to look. It's a mellow place, with subtle recessed lighting, low, cream-colored walls divided by pillars, and spots of color here and there—a fuchsia-lemon burst of heliconia and birds-of-paradise in a cobalt-blue vase, waterscapes by a young Vietnamese artist, translucent alabaster lamps. The floor plan—in deference to the rules of feng-shui—involves several sharp turns, so that money doesn't flow straight in and straight out. "The underlying idea is that the food should be the art, so we didn't want the interior to be so fussy that you're distracted from the food," Ming explains. This is important, because Blue Ginger has an open galley kitchen down one side—a narrow island of steel and stoves that is set apart from the rest of the bistro by a forty-foot-long pearl-granite counter. The chefs are on display at all times, and they can't appear to be struggling; they have to look as if they're having fun. As the cooks, in baseball caps, prepare Ming's fanciful dishes—Indonesian curry pasta with coconut shrimp, deftly molded cylinders of salmon-jicama tartare, achiote-rubbed pork loin with crisp plantain wings—Ming supervises or helps out, taking a slug from a bottle of Italian water as he walks among them. After a dish has been brought from the wok, grill, or sauté pan to the "line" and been "plated up," the cooks, Ming included, garnish the plates by dipping into a cluster of steel and plastic tubs filled with sesame seeds, sliced lengths of lemongrass, flying-fish roe, chopped cilantro, and a variety of chili flakes—and finish the job by using squeeze bottles to squirt on aromatic chili and basil oils, truffle citrus vinaigrette, or spicy aioli. They look less like adepts of haute cuisine than like ice-cream-counter clerks, dispensing Asian herbs instead of chocolate sprinkles.

PEOPLE beyond Boston began to hear about Blue Ginger when they started seeing Ming on the Food Network. The network was launched in 1993, by Reese Schonfeld, who also founded CNN. The idea was to have a channel that would broadcast nothing but food programming, half-hour after half-hour, day after day, and demonstrate that Martha Stewart (who now has a show on the channel) did not have a monopoly on the good life. Programmers filled the lineup with lulling sets—green and gold, with gardens, kitchens, and fireplaces—and perfect marinades to soothe overworked

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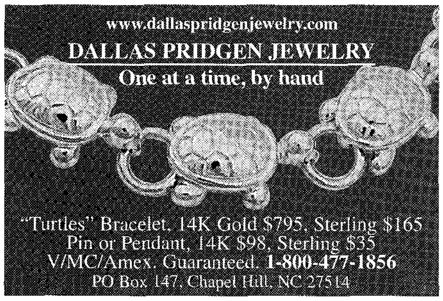

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viewers and convince them that salvation lay in home-cooked meals. The station began with six million subscribers. Today, it has forty-two million, and the hosts of its most popular shows have become stars in their own right.

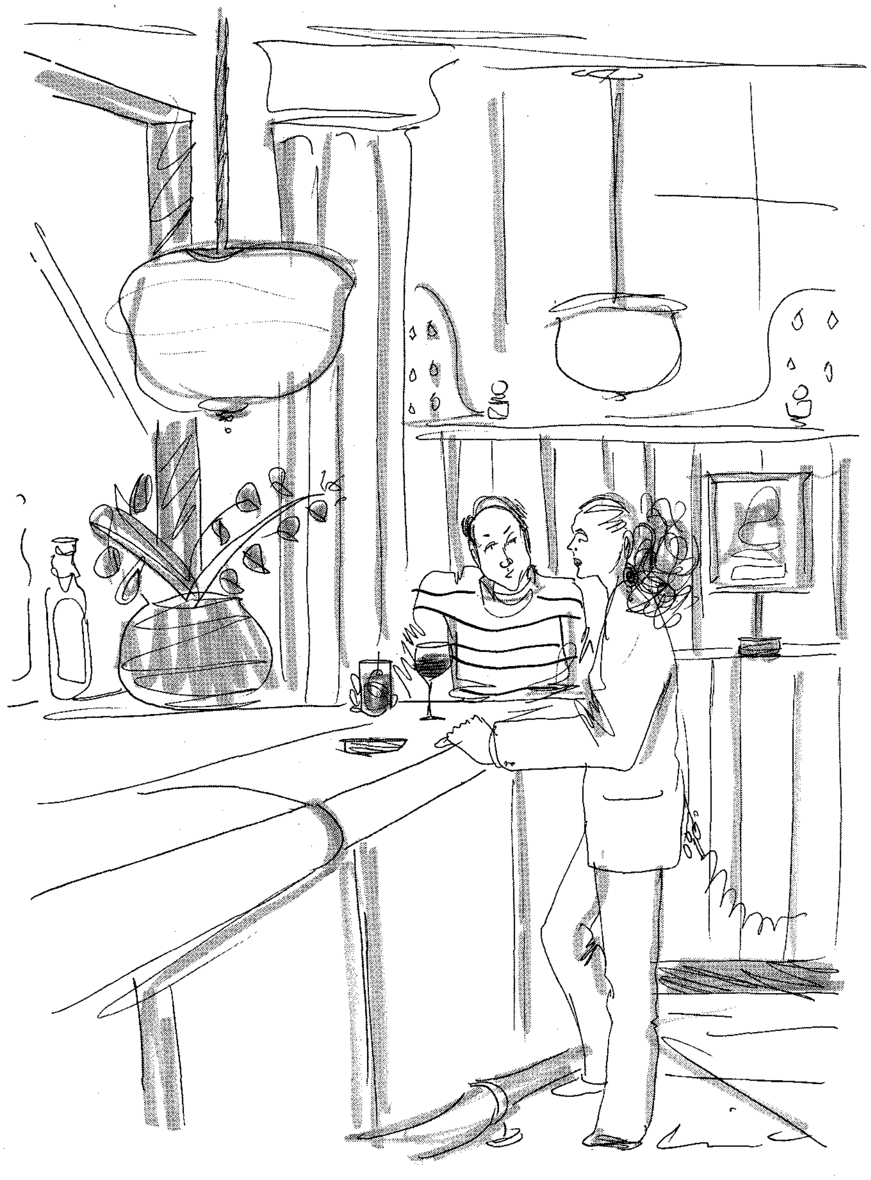
Sara Moulton, the executive chef at *Gourmet*, is one of these stars. A mild blond icon of conscientious working motherhood, Moulton presides over "Cooking Live" and "Cooking Live Primetime" with unruffled efficiency, calmly fielding questions from phone-in viewers and chatting with guests as she roasts beef, bastes potatoes, or fries up fish-and-chips. Emeril Lagasse, the burly animus behind "Emeril Live" and "Essence of Emeril," has a rowdier approach. He bellows the instructions for his garlic-and-Cajun-spice-stuffed recipes, and likes to punctuate completed cooking steps with shouts of "BAM!"—presumably to keep anyone who has lost interest in his food from nodding off. Bobby Flay and Jacqui Malouf host an average-Joe sitcom-with-food for thirty-somethings called "Hot Off the Grill with Bobby Flay," in which Jacqui giggles encouragement as Bobby, who looks as if he'd just come back from a drag race, sears pork chops. There are thirty-two regular weekday shows in all, and scores of occasional ones, such as the game show "Taste Test with David Rosengarten" and reruns of the irreverent British curio "Two Fat Ladies," in which the hefty hosts dole out lard and butter by the fistful and rhapsodize about streaky bacon.

Ming saw the network's potential early, and when its programmers sought him out in New Mexico he began to contemplate a move back East. Once he had settled in Massachusetts, the calls came more and more frequently. Marilyn O'Reilly, the network producer, told him that if he was serious about TV he'd have to get some media training. "At that point, I was a consulting chef—all chefs that don't have a job are called consulting chefs—and the training would cost me three thousand dollars for two days, and that's a lot of *coin*, and my wife's like, 'Gosh, three thousand dollars?'" Ming decided that it was worth it. For two days, he studied with Lou Ekus, a media trainer whose specialty is improving the stoveside manner of television chefs, and whose past pupils include Emeril Lagasse and Sara Moulton.

Ekus taught Ming to stand up straight and to avoid the "chef hunch," the unconscious slouch of a chef leaning over a finished dish, blind to the camera, making sure that everything looks perfect. He taught Ming to treat the camera as if it were one person's face, rather than an audience of three hundred million. "When you're talking to a camera, you're speaking to each one of those people individually," he explained, and instructed Ming to imagine that when he looked into the camera he was addressing the most beautiful, desirable female in the world, who was all alone in a room, watching nobody but him. "I've got someone in mind," Ming told him. "You do?" Ekus asked. "Yeah, and I have a picture I can show you." Ming pulled out a picture of his dog, a Border collie named Jasmin, who was then a puppy. Later, during filming, he taped it under the camera lens. "It made me smile," he says. "Every time I looked at it, I was, like, 'Jasmin, what are you doin' there?'"

The most important lesson Ekus taught Ming was how to *talk* to the camera. "There are three categories of words that people need to delete from their vocabulary when they're doing media," Ekus says firmly. "One of those is the Useless Enhancer—'beautiful, delicious, fantastic, great, fabulous, superb, lovely.' If I put a piece of cheesecake in front of you and say, 'This is a great piece of cheesecake,' all you know about this cheesecake is that I want to sell it to you. If I say, 'This piece of cheesecake, it's moist, it's light, it's got a touch of amaretto, and a crunchy graham-cracker crust,' I never *say* it's great, but I tell you *why* it's great."

A second pitfall is the Dangerous



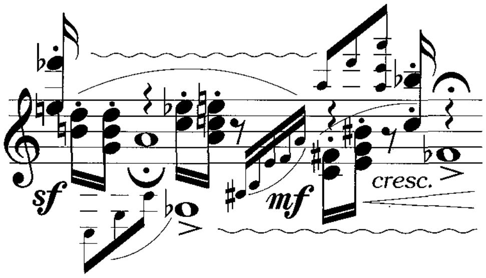
"I'm attracted to you, but then I'm attracted to me, too."

Mediator. "If you say, 'I think this is the best way to make matzo balls,' that leaves the door open for someone to disagree," Ekus explains. "If you say, 'I think,' or 'in my opinion,' that's a conversation, that's not television—and on TV you're supposed to be the expert, you know how to make the perfect matzo ball."

But the trickiest of all the rhetorical perils is Negativity. "We learn in our society to speak in negatives, but it just doesn't work in the media," Ekus warns. He disapproved of Ming's insinuation, in the program's sushi episode, that raw fish was scary, and that wasabi could be too hot. "I don't ever want to hear the negative words coming out of your mouth," Ekus says sternly. "We reinforce this all the time in TV. You have to get rid of these negative statements because you just don't want negative words associated with your food. If something's 'not too difficult,' then it's 'simple, anybody can do it!' and if it's 'not using ingredients that are weird,' then it's 'using ingredients that everybody's got in their kitchen.' A negative statement doesn't exist that you can't put in a positive way."

After the training session, Ming was asked to fill in for a vacationing Sara Moulton, and viewer response was so high that he was soon given his own show. It débuted in the last week of September, 1998. In May, when "East Meets West" had been on the air for just over seven months, it won a daytime Emmy Award—the only time the Food Network has even been nominated—beating out "This Old House" and the Martha Stewart and Julia Child shows. The winning episode, one of the first that Ming taped, was a Thanksgiving special in which he made turkey more exciting—not that he would ever say anything *negative* about the bird. "I'm a big fan of the traditional roasted turkey, just like the next guy," he proclaimed. Nonetheless, he transformed the damp, bland holiday staple into two dishes that would startle most grandparents: grilled, marinated turkey breast with citrus sauce and three-pea fried rice, and smoky turkey shumai dumplings in a sweet-pea broth.

So far, a hundred and ten episodes of "East Meets West" have been taped. Every three months, Ming does ten concentrated days of taping in two weeks, hurrying back to Boston on the weekends to supervise Blue Ginger. Today, Ming is taping four shows back



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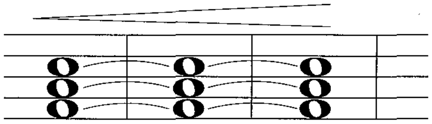

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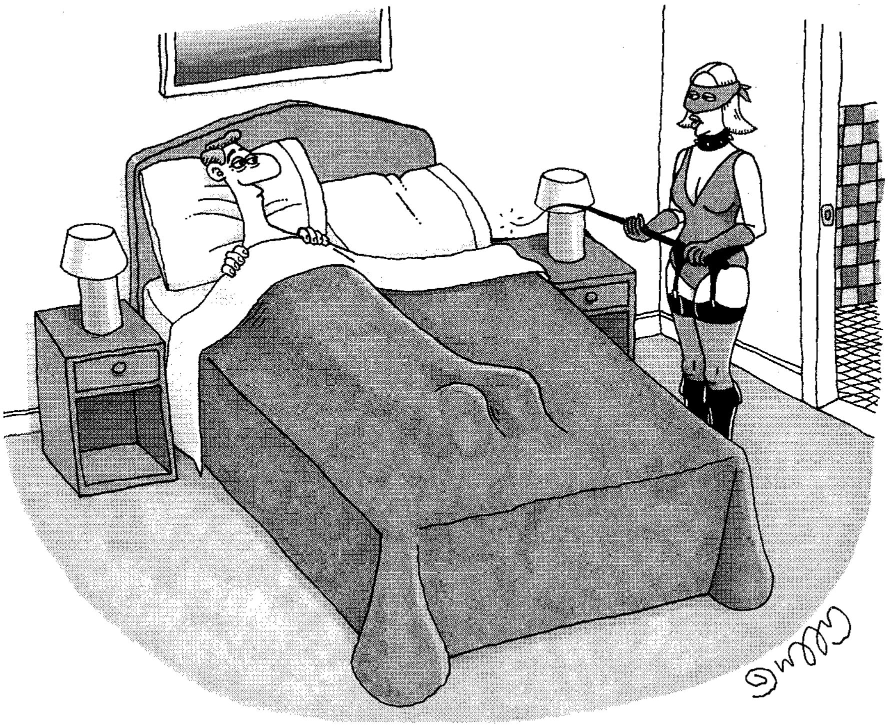


"Please listen carefully, as my menu options have changed."

• •

to back, each requiring two or three hours to shoot. The undertaking demands the focussed collaboration of a control room full of directors, producers, and prompters; four cameramen; and a handful of kitchen assistants, who wheel trolleys piled with ingredients and dishes in varying stages of readiness from the Food Network's kitchen to the set and back.

The television kitchen where Ming performs, on West Fifty-second Street, is sleek and airy, with pleasing Asian accents—semitropical plants, cherrywood beams, paper-and-bamboo screens—and the most up-to-date American cooking equipment. On one side of the cooking area is a round teak table where Ming tastes his dishes at the end of each show. Behind the tasting table is a discreet water wall that seems to murmur "Feng-shui! Feng-shui!" as water sluices down its bumpy rock surface.

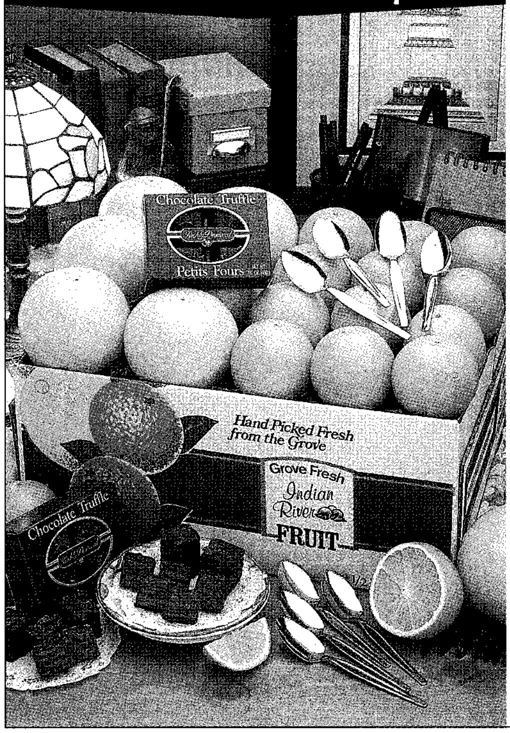
Today's shows include an episode on Peking duck, which Ming calls "the big kahuna of Chinese cooking," and which requires special preparations. Five amber ducks dangle in a row from a wire shelving unit, tied by the neck with twine, like the illustration of a cautionary tale for ducklings. Ming wants to show the audience how the Chinese in China prepare their ducks. Four cameras stand in front of the kitchen, three on pedestals, one mounted on a jib that floats above the set, poised to zoom in on a wok or to catch a dough-rolling technique. Ming takes a hose from, of all things, an air-compression machine, slips it into an incision in the skin of a duck's neck, and rapid-inflates the bird, like an air mattress, so that its skin puffs out all the way from the top of the back to the tips of the legs, detaching itself from the meat of the bird. Separating the skin from the duck is the sine qua non of Peking duck; it insures that, after the duck is dipped in boiling sauce and baked, the skin will be crispy.

While the ducks await their cues, Ming runs through the patter for another show—a squid recipe with a spicy black-bean sauce. Some Americans have an anti-squid bias, so he practices explaining that squid is just calamari, "like in an Italian restaurant." He turns the preparation of squid into a personal challenge for achievement-minded chefs. "Ya gotta cook it under two minutes or over thirty—there's no middle ground," he says. As he goes through the script, he pauses at a word on the teleprompter. "Cephalod?" he says indignantly to his producer, Julia Harrison. " 'Squid is a kind of cephalod'?" That's not right, is it? That's 'cephalopod,'" he says, correcting the control room. Ming is not an intellectual, and he is not a snob—not even a food snob—but he is a perfectionist.

ONE evening at Blue Ginger, Ming stops at a table in the back of the restaurant to drop in on a family that has come to celebrate a daughter's graduation from business college. They squeal like game-show contestants when he walks among them, and take picture after picture. "You guys are wasting a lot of film," Ming says, laughing. "We're such Ming Tsai groupies!" an elderly woman tells him, dabbing her eyes from excitement. "You need to get a life," Ming teases.

Later, after the rush has subsided, Ming and Polly sit down with me. The lights are low, and Ming's team brings dish after dish to the table for us to devour. We start with calamari, enhanced, but not uselessly, with a warm, thin crust made from three kinds of flour. We dunk it in Thai dipping sauce. "It'll never taste better, if I may be so bold," Polly says, oblivious of the Dangerous Mediator. We have scallops and foie gras wrapped in rice paper and served with a truffled-mushroom ragout. Crab cakes arrive, still warm and crispy from a deep oil bath and refreshed by a drizzle of corn salsa and Thai-basil vinaigrette. And then comes Ming's signature dish: Chilean sea bass marinated in sake and miso and served with wasabi oil and soy syrup and vegetarian soba-noodle sushi. The fish is hot, salty, and sweet. The wasabi stings, and the sushi is springy. "Every bite should have a balance of texture which is soft and crunchy," Ming explains. "And there should be a good balance of flavors. For some dishes, that means sweet and sour; for others, it means hot and spicy versus sugary. And you need a balance of contrasting temperatures—cold kimchee on hot beef, room-temperature sushi with hot bass.

"Everyone wants to be a chef now," Ming says. "Unlike painting or sculpture, which requires natural talent, it's something you can learn—a good amount of it, anyway—at schools. It's very romantic. When you prepare food, you can see, you can smell, you can touch. You can even hear—you can hear the sizzling. And you can taste. It's the only art that satisfies every sense." ♦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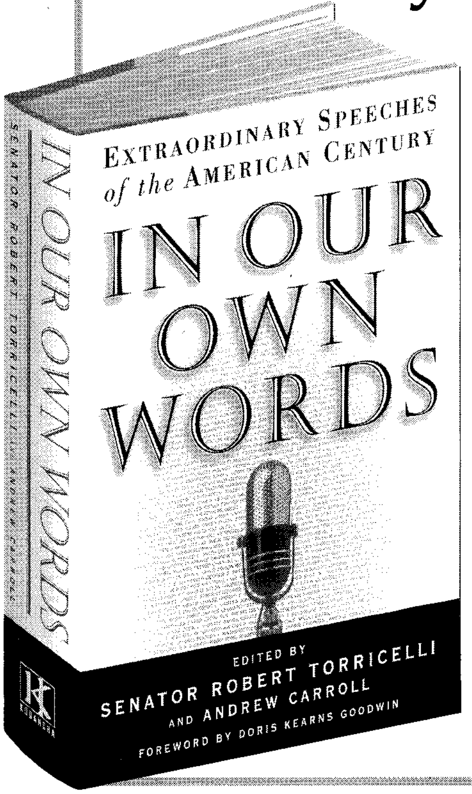
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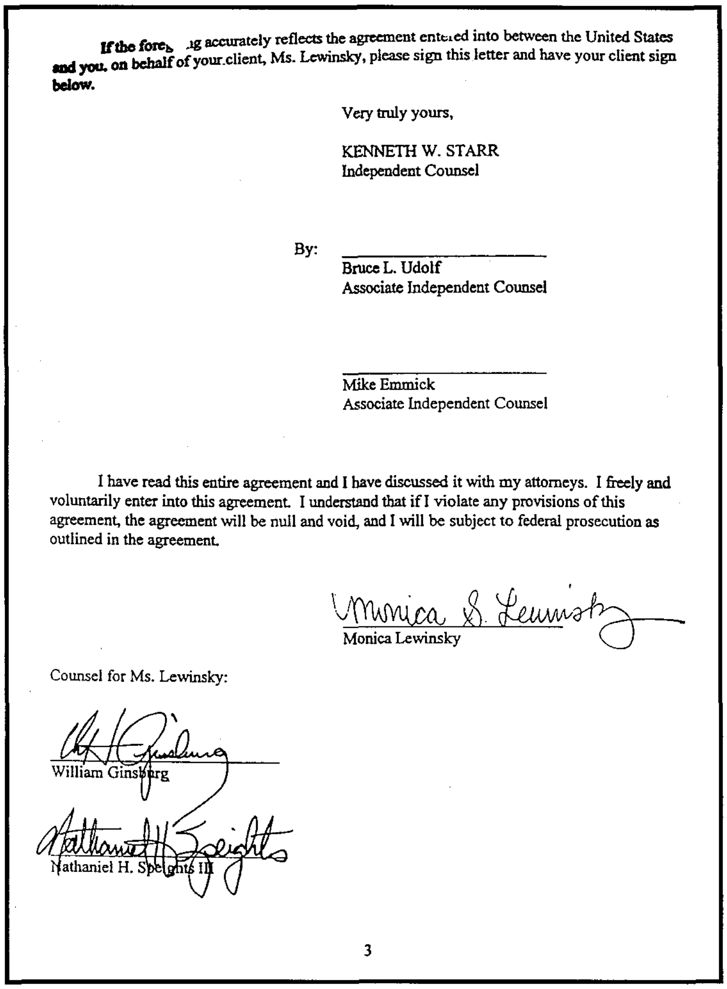

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Nathaniel H. Speights III

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THE siege of the Clinton Presidency lasted thirteen months, from January of 1998 until February of this year. In retrospect, the events of that time have about them a sense of inevitability. Clinton's survival in office, it is often said, was preordained—by his support in the polls, by the economy, by the private nature of the conduct at the heart of the case. In fact, the President came far closer to losing his office than is generally supposed. And his moment of greatest peril came not during the famous public events of the Monica Lewinsky crisis but, rather, during a set of closed-door negotiations that have remained to a great extent secret. The people who determined Clinton's fate were not, for the most part, the familiar cast of accusers and defenders in the case—neither the President's critics in Congress nor his own lawyers played any role—but a group of prosecutors in the office of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr whose names are relatively unknown.

The crisis began in earnest late in the afternoon of Friday, January 16th, when a medical-malpractice lawyer named William Ginsburg was urgently summoned to downtown Los Angeles by an old friend and client named Bernard Lewinsky, an oncological radiologist.

"Monica's in some kind of trouble," Lewinsky said.

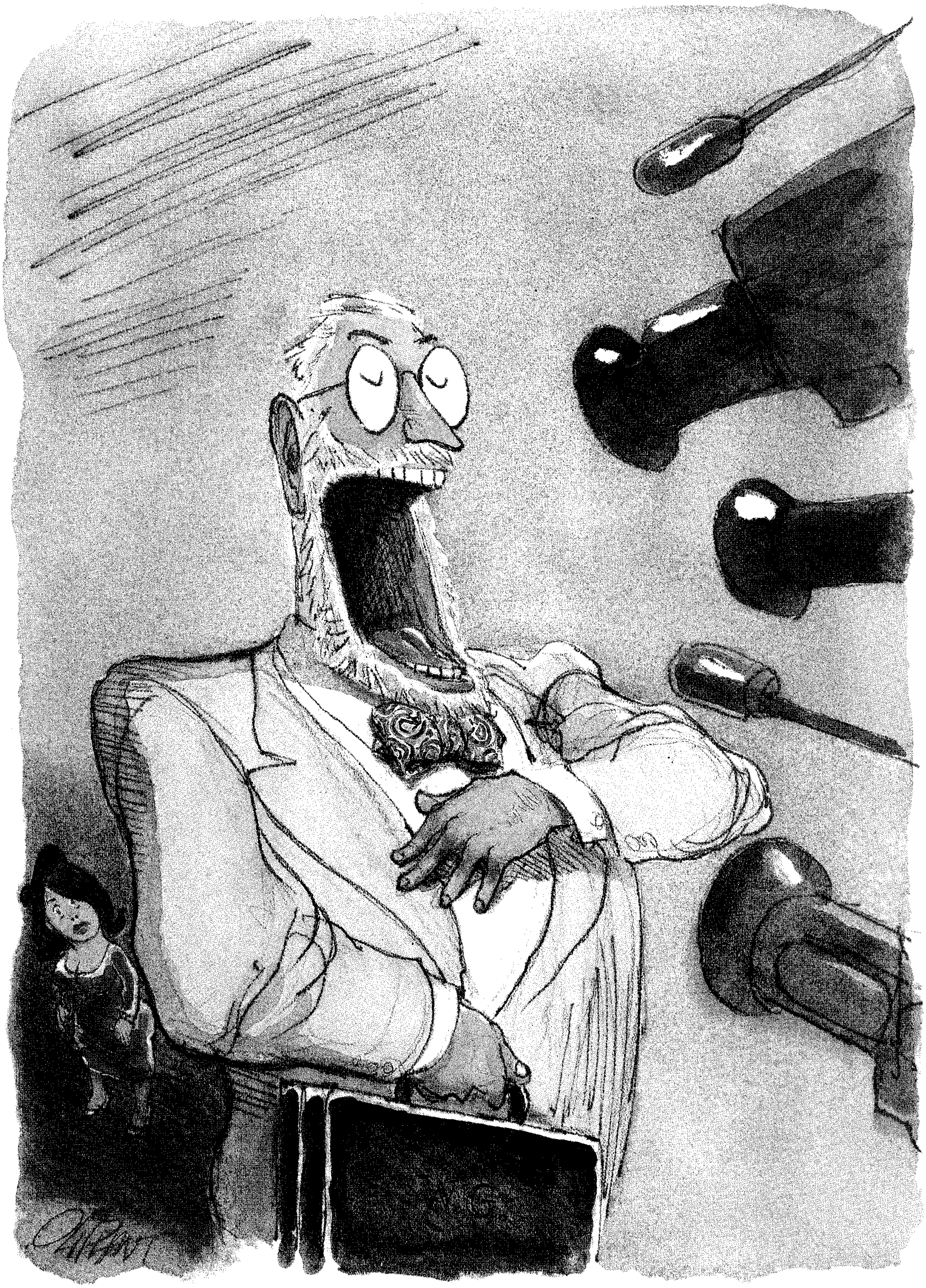
Ginsburg knew that Lewinsky's daughter had been working at the Pentagon, and he had an immediate thought. Espionage! Monica had been arrested for selling state secrets!

Not exactly, said her father. He told Ginsburg that earlier that day F.B.I. agents and prosecutors from Starr's office had confronted Monica at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, just outside Washington, and asked her to coöperate with their investigation. Based on information they had received from her friend Linda Tripp, the investigators believed that Lewinsky had been promised a job in New York in return for her agreement to file a false affidavit in the Paula Jones case. According to this hypothesis, Lewinsky, at the President's instigation, had lied about a clandestine relationship they had conducted for nearly two years. The threat of prosecution notwithstanding, Lewinsky, who had been joined at the hotel by her mother, refused to coöperate, and Ginsburg flew to Washington to join her the following day.

Lewinsky picked up Ginsburg at the airport, and they went to the bar at the Hay-Adams Hotel, across Lafayette Park from the White House, to talk. There Lewinsky told her new lawyer that she had been romantically involved with the President from about November, 1995, until March, 1997. Ginsburg, who was approaching the case both as Bernie's friend and as Monica's attorney, was repelled by the thought of Bill Clinton seducing a woman almost three decades his junior. Ginsburg was horrified mainly by what the relationship had done to the twenty-four-year-old woman he had known as a child. She was in a state of near-hysteria, and possibly suicidal. His first priority was to get psychiatric attention for her.

The next day, Ginsburg made his way to the Starr office, on Pennsylvania Avenue, and there a group of prosecutors reiterated the demands they had made to Lewinsky. They discussed

ILLUSTRATIONS BY PATRICK OLIPHANT



The prosecutors refused to sign the agreement (opposite), and the President survived. William Ginsburg on the attack.

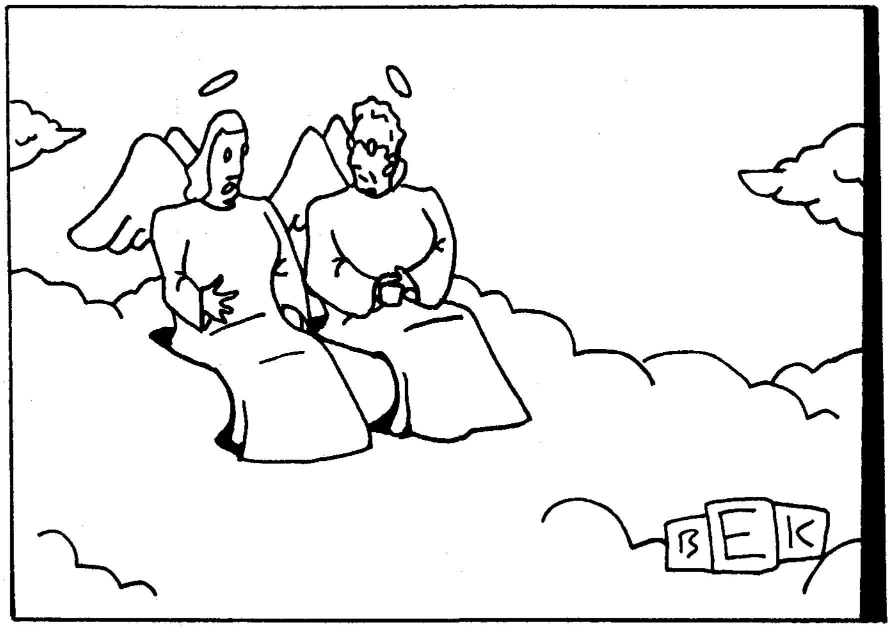
the possibility of her making "controlled" phone calls to the President's White House secretary, Betty Currie, his friend Vernon Jordan, and possibly the President himself, in the hope that she would elicit damaging admissions from them. Ginsburg said no—such betrayals were un-American, he insisted. Besides, he thought that if Lewinsky became an undercover operative it would overwhelm her precarious mental state. Ginsburg promised that his client would tell prosecutors everything she knew but said that she wouldn't go to work for them.

At this point, Ginsburg wanted to see Clinton exposed as a "misogynist," even as a "molester." Yet the prosecutors were greedy. They wanted Lewinsky to enter a guilty plea in connection with the filing of her affidavit in the Paula Jones case and then testify against the President. They said that if Lewinsky coöperated with them after her plea they would make a motion to the sentencing judge that would virtually guarantee her no jail time. Ginsburg was bewildered. Who had ever heard of prosecuting a twenty-four-year-old for lying about an affair?

Realizing that he needed help, Ginsburg placed a phone call to an old acquaintance, Nathaniel Speights, an experienced, if low-profile, Washington criminal lawyer, and asked him to assist with the legal work. Negotiating with the Office of the Independent Counsel over the next several months, Speights would play the good (or, at least, the rational) cop to Ginsburg's erratic bad cop.

IN the first frenetic days after the Lewinsky investigation began, the Starr team convened twice a day in his suite of offices on Pennsylvania Avenue, at eight in the morning and at five in the afternoon. Dozens of prosecutors, agents, paralegals—as many as fifty at a time—would gather around a conference table to discuss the matters before the office. (Often, a team of people working for Starr in Little Rock would join in the conversations by speakerphone.) Starr believed in giving everyone a chance to talk, and the result was a maddeningly slow way to do business. But the group dynamic had a substantive impact, too. Starr often spoke of the need for "toughness." The independent counsel hated the fact that the public saw him as a weakling. One day, he mentioned how angry he was that some of his adversaries in Little Rock were spreading the false rumor that he was having an affair on his visits there; what really made him furious was that everyone—everyone!—thought that the rumor was inconceivable.

In January of 1998, Starr had been independent counsel—originally assigned to investigate the Whitewater land deal—for almost three and a half years. A former solicitor general and appellate-court judge, Starr had no prior experience as a prosecutor; in an early meeting with subordinates in Arkansas, he astonished the group by asking, "What's a 5K motion?"—Justice Department argot for the offer of a reduced sentence in return for testimony against higher-ups. To an unprecedented degree in the history of major criminal cases, the lead prosecutor was dependent on the advice of his staff.

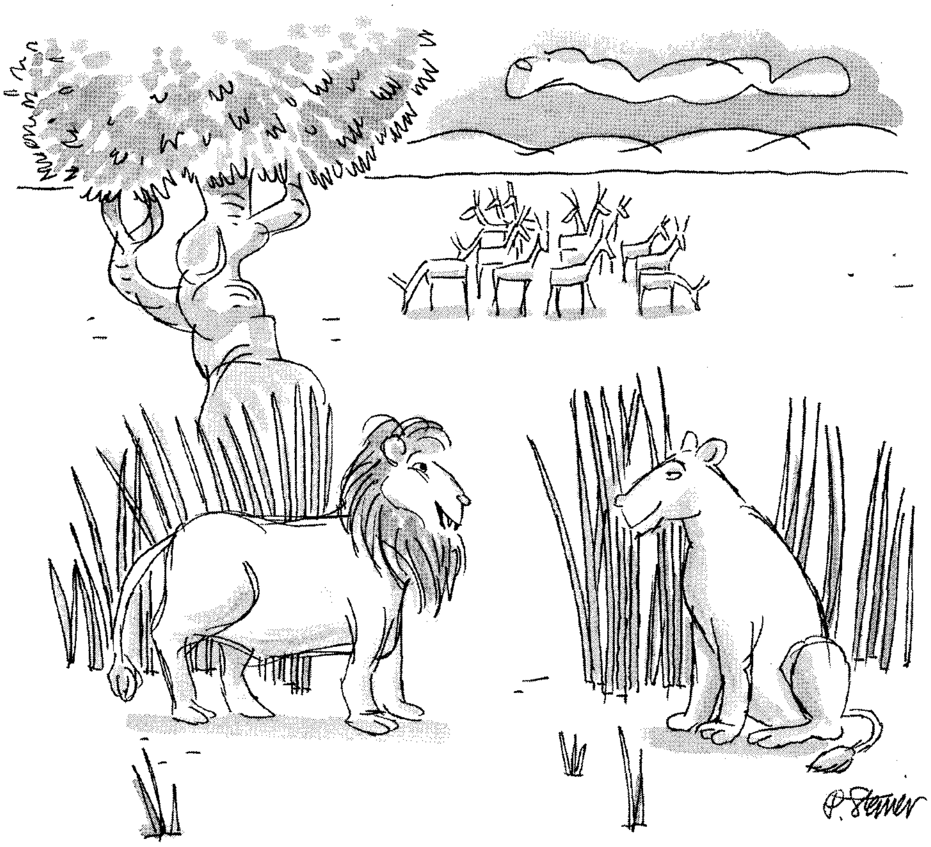


"Is this what I want to be doing with my death?"

By the time the Lewinsky investigation began, an entire generation of senior prosecutors had rotated through Starr's office. This group had achieved some modest successes prosecuting criminal activity in Arkansas that bore little or no relation to the President or his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton. The Clintons' close friend Webster Hubbell had pleaded guilty to bilking the law firm where he and the First Lady had worked; the Clintons' former business partners, Jim and Susan McDougal, along with Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker, had been convicted in another case. For the most part, the prosecutors who brought these cases had returned to the lives they had been leading when they were hired by Starr.

A hard core of prosecutors remained. At age forty-one, Jackie Bennett, Jr., was as committed as anyone to bringing Clinton down. Before joining Starr, he had spent several years as a prosecutor in the public-integrity section of the Justice Department, on a crusade against politicians in south Texas. There Bennett had mixed results. He won a conviction against former Representative Albert Bustamante, for accepting bribes, and he also won the Justice Department's John Marshall Award for Excellence, which is given to some of the top prosecutors in the nation. But he lost a case against Doug Jaffe, a businessman in San Antonio who was a big contributor to the Democratic Party. In that case, the trial judge delivered an unusual rebuke, saying, "I really wish you'd take a message back to [the Justice Department] that we're not interested in wasting our time on rinky-dink cases." Because of episodes like this, and perhaps because he had kept the hulking build and demeanor of the college football player he once was, Bennett was known to some colleagues in the Justice Department as "the thug."

The other lawyer who had stuck with the case almost from the beginning was Robert Bittman. When he was hired, in 1994, Bittman was thirty-two years old,



"Can I get you something to eat?"

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and his legal career consisted of six years as an assistant state's attorney in Maryland's Anne Arundel County. There Bittman mainly prosecuted street crime in Annapolis. In his most noteworthy case, he tried a high-school teacher for having had consensual sex with one of her students. She was acquitted. Bittman, too, was a devoted athlete, and, like Bennett, he was a stalwart Republican.

Though he had been hired as a junior prosecutor in Starr's office, Bob Bittman had stayed long enough to see virtually all the veterans who started with him move on to other opportunities. He eventually took over as a sort of chief administrative officer of the Starr investigation, running meetings and keeping tabs on various investigations. In office debates about strategy, Bittman (like Bennett) invariably took the toughest line with the office's adversaries. This impressed Starr, who gave Bittman the nickname Bulldog.

Two other top prosecutors joined Starr's team in the middle of 1997, Mike Emmick and Bruce Udolf. The two knew each other only casually when they came to Washington, but they had enjoyed remarkably similar careers. Emmick had just completed seven years as the head of the public-corruption and government-fraud section in the United States Attorney's office in Los Angeles; Udolf had spent five years as Emmick's counterpart in Miami. Emmick specialized in crooked cops, and Udolf often prosecuted corrupt politicians; between them they probably had more relevant experience than any two prosecutors in the country—certainly any in Starr's office. They both thought the high-profile experience in Washington would round out their public careers.

In temperament, the two newcomers could not have differed more. Emmick, brown-haired and blue-eyed, fit the stereotype of the laid-back Californian. Udolf, unpolished and abrupt, brought a brittle intensity to his work; he had just recovered from a liver disease, which diminished his already meagre tolerance for fools. Both were in their mid-forties, but Emmick was single, a ladies' man who spent vacations riding dirt bikes, while Udolf was married and the devoted father of a baby girl. (Udolf and Emmick did share membership in the Democratic Party, which was a rarity among Starr's staffers.) In part because of Emmick's easygoing demeanor, he was chosen to conduct the interview of Lewinsky at the Ritz-Carlton.

In the critical weeks to come, these four prosecutors would engage each other in an angry battle over Starr's strategy in the Lewinsky investigation. Bennett and Bittman took one side, and Emmick and Udolf the other. The Clinton Presidency turned on the outcome.

On Sunday, January 18th—the day after Ginsburg brought Nate Speights into the case—Speights called Mike Emmick with a simple message: You're bluffing.

Speights knew that Starr needed Lewinsky's testimony to prosecute anyone he really wanted: Clinton, Jordan, Currie—people connected to the White House. Speights told Emmick that if his office was considering prosecuting Monica it could forget about any kind of coöperation. He wanted immunity for her, or there would be no further discussions. Emmick called back and said that immunity was a possibility, but the prosecutors first needed to hear more from Monica herself. He invited Ginsburg, Speights, and Lewinsky to the Office of the Independent Counsel the following day, Monday, January 19th, Martin Luther King Day.

Ginsburg spent most of that day shuttling between two conference rooms—one holding the prosecutors and the other a weeping Lewinsky. Ginsburg and Speights wouldn't let the prosecutors speak directly to Lewinsky, but they did agree to relay questions and answers. Her message to the prosecutors, which never changed in the following year, was that she had had a sexual relationship with the President, but that Clinton had not asked her to lie about it in the Jones case.

That afternoon, in the middle of this series of exchanges, the prosecutors were called away to hear some important news: the latest posting of the Drudge Report, the on-line gossip page that made the first public reference to Lewinsky by name. "It's too late now," Jackie Bennett announced, referring to Monica's value as a covert operative. "She's radioactive."

Even though the story was beginning to reach a wider public—the Drudge item was being faxed all over town—Ginsburg and Speights felt that they were approaching a deal. While Ginsburg talked to Lewinsky in one conference room, Bennett, Emmick, and Bittman consulted with Starr. (Ginsburg met Starr only once, when they found themselves at adjoining urinals in the men's room.) About six hours passed. Finally, the lawyers for both sides reconvened, and Jackie Bennett announced that he was standing firm on the conditions for a deal. Lewinsky would have to tell her story to the prosecutors directly before they would give her immunity.

Ginsburg said no. For one thing, he didn't trust Starr's team. He believed that Lewinsky would tell them everything they needed to know, and then they would turn on her and prosecute her anyway; something similar had happened to Webster Hubbell. More important, though, he believed that Lewinsky was simply not stable enough to deal directly with the prosecutors. (He was, in fact, in the process of arranging psychiatric care for her.)

Bennett's response was patronizing. "It would be malpractice if we entered into an immunity agreement without talking to her first," he said.

Malpractice was Ginsburg's turf. He removed his glasses and shot back, "So who the fuck is going to sue you?" (Bennett does not recall this exchange.)

The conversation went on along these lines for some time, until finally, late on Monday night, Bennett tried one last gambit to shake up the Lewinsky team: he mentioned to Ginsburg that successful doctors, like Bernie Lewinsky, often found themselves in trouble with the I.R.S. (Bennett denies bringing up the I.R.S.) Ginsburg was then asked to accept a subpoena for Monica's father.

Ginsburg, who was jet-lagged and emotionally overwrought, lost his composure completely. As he later recalled the scene, he shouted, "You motherfucking, cocksucking cunt! I will kill you before I accept service for a subpoena to Bernie." Stunned, the prosecutors, who were sitting on the other side of the conference table, stood up.

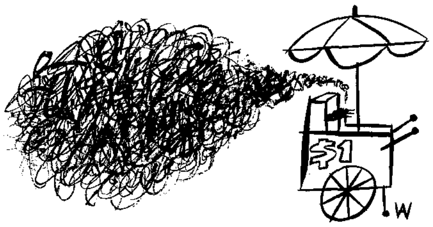
"If you want to take a cut at me," Ginsburg went on, "I'll whip your ass." The issue of immunity for Monica remained unresolved, but the prosecutors had managed to shift Ginsburg's anger away from Clinton—and onto them.

Moments later, Ginsburg went to the other conference room to get Lewinsky. As Monica walked to the elevator with Ginsburg and Speights, she fell to the floor, weeping. The two lawyers almost had to carry her out of the office.

A DAY and a half later, on Wednesday, January 21st, Lewinsky's name surfaced in the mainstream press, and she became the object of the most intense media surveillance since O. J. Simpson's Bronco dash across Southern California. Camera crews established a vigil in front of the Watergate complex; the pictures of Lewinsky fighting her way through hordes of photographers became a television cliché.

With such extraordinary attention being paid to his client, Ginsburg closed off virtually all contact between Monica and the outside world. He told her to stop speaking with almost everyone except her mother. Monica moved upstairs, to the sixth floor of the Watergate, to an apartment belonging to her grandmother, and she began spending her time staring at her own image on the television and relying on her attorney to keep her apprised of her fate.

As that frantic first week proceeded, the Office of the Independent Counsel assigned the negotiations with Ginsburg to Emmick and Udolf. At the time, Bennett was busy overseeing the investigation, and Bittman was cloistered in a hotel room conducting a secret debriefing of Betty Currie, in preparation for her appearance before the grand jury. Emmick and Udolf quickly came to the conclusion that it was self-defeating to go on quibbling about immunity for Lewinsky. The two prosecutors even made a late-night visit to Nate Speights's home in an attempt to reopen negotiations.



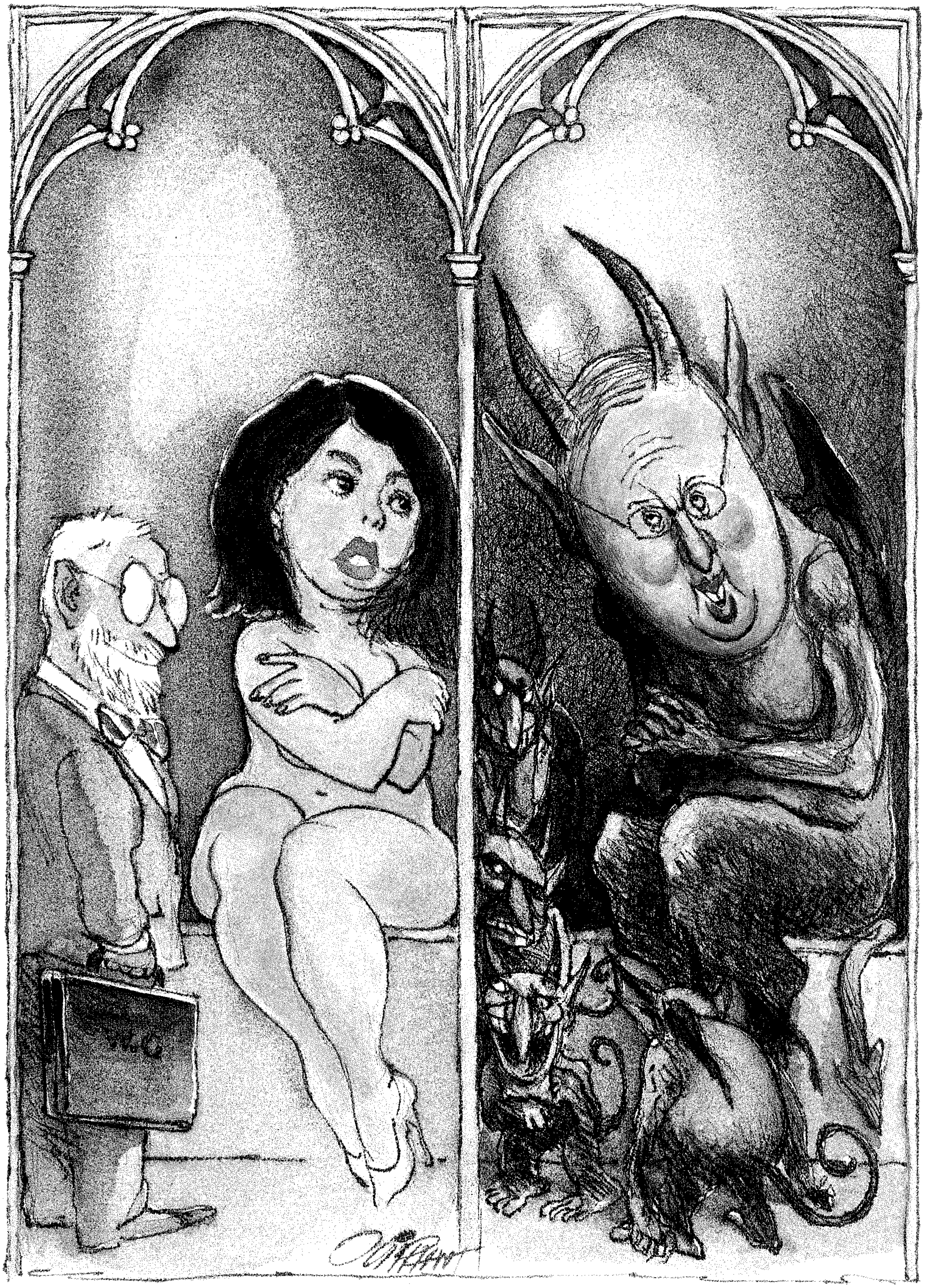
Emmick and Udolf saw, as Speights had, that they had, at best, a one-witness case against Clinton, for lying and obstruction of justice, and that Monica was the witness. Ginsburg was behaving like a clown, but the needs of the case required that Starr give the lawyer what he wanted—immunity for Monica.

On January 27th, the White House began its counter-offensive. The day began with Mrs. Clinton on the "Today" program, when she attributed her husband's difficulties to a "vast right-wing conspiracy," and it ended with Clinton's State of the Union address. At the same time, Ginsburg and the prosecutors were exchanging drafts of an agreement. Emmick and Udolf would haggle with Ginsburg and then return to the conference room, where their work would be critiqued by the full staff. The invariable consensus was that Emmick and Udolf weren't being tough enough. Why won't she take a polygraph? the committee asked. In response, Udolf added a line about a polygraph to the agreement. What if she told her psychiatrists about her relationship with Clinton? Another new line was added, saying that the prosecutors could interview Lewinsky's therapists.

But the committee of lawyers persisted on the issue of meeting directly with Lewinsky. Why, they asked, should we give her immunity if we don't talk to her first? Ginsburg hit on a compromise with Emmick and Udolf. In her own hand, Lewinsky would write out a statement that would summarize her testimony, and the prosecutors could analyze whether it was sufficient.

So Ginsburg sent Lewinsky to an empty room at the Cosmos Club, near Dupont Circle, where the lawyer was then staying, and he told her what the prosecutors wanted. Lewinsky sat down and began to write. The resulting document, ten pages in a girlish scrawl, was above all a poignant description of a young woman's crush. She covered all the key issues in the relationship—her transfer from the White House to the Pentagon, her dealings with Vernon Jordan, her job hunt, the subpoena from the Jones team—but the first two paragraphs gave the clearest picture of Lewinsky's view of the relationship, and also isolated the key legal issues:

> 1. Ms. Lewinsky had an intimate and emotional relationship with President Clin-



Ginsburg promised that his client would tell the prosecutors everything she knew but that she wouldn't go to work for them.

"Tell me more about the years you spent in formaldehyde at Area 51."

> ton beginning in 1995. At various times between 1995 and 1997, Ms. Lewinsky and the President had physically intimate contact. This included oral sex, but excluded intercourse.
>
> 2. When asked what should be said if anyone questioned Ms. Lewinsky about her being with the President, he said she should say she was bringing him letters (when she worked in Legislative Affairs) or visiting Betty Currie (after she left the WH). There is truth to both of these statements.

The ten pages were good enough for Emmick and Udolf. The handwritten proffer merely repeated what Monica had been saying through her lawyers all week, and it was undoubtedly the best they were going to do. On Sunday, February 1st, Emmick wrote to Ginsburg that he saw the differences between them as "relatively small." The deal, in other words, was just about cut.

FROM the day Lewinsky's name became public, Ginsburg had revelled in the media attention. His talkathon reached a high point on February 1st, when he appeared on five Sunday talk shows. He didn't just talk a lot; he seemed to go out of his way to offend the prosecutors with whom he was trying to close the deal. For one thing, in the interviews Ginsburg simply lied about what Lewinsky's testimony would be. On television, he was suggesting that there had not been a sexual relationship between Lewinsky and Clinton, while he had been telling the prosecutors that there had been. The prosecutors were enraged by Ginsburg's dishonesty and by his denunciations of the Starr team for its inflexibility.

On Monday, February 2nd, Emmick and Udolf pressed forward on closing the deal with Lewinsky. Udolf wanted to strengthen that portion of the written proffer in which she admitted that Clinton had told her to lie about their relationship, and to clarify the timing. After several phone calls, the two lawyers settled on the following language, which Lewinsky approved and then wrote out in her own hand:

> 11. At some point in the relationship between Ms. L and the President, the President told Ms. L to deny a relationship, if ever asked about it. He also said something to the effect of if the two people who are involved say it didn't happen, it didn't happen. Ms. L knows this was said some time prior to the subpoena in the Paula Jones case.
>
> 12. Item #2 above also occurred prior to the subpoena in the Paula Jones case.

The statement, even with the additions, did not give the prosecutors everything they wanted. Lewinsky's position was that Clinton always wanted her to lie about their relationship, not just when the Jones lawyers asked her about it. As Ginsburg and Lewinsky recognized—indeed, as a clear majority of the country came to recognize—lying was an integral part of adultery, with or without a pending lawsuit.

There did not seem to be any purpose in prosecuting Lewinsky, Udolf told Ginsburg. "If you, Mr. Speights, and your client will sign and return it to us . . . we have a deal," Ginsburg remembers him saying. As Emmick later testified, after they had discussed the last two paragraphs, he heard Udolf give "words of assent" to Ginsburg that they had what they needed to conclude an immunity deal for Lewinsky.

In this conversation, late on Monday night, Udolf asked Lewinsky's lawyers when his team could start debriefing Monica. Ginsburg said that he was taking Lewinsky home to Los Angeles, to see her father, the following day, but that they could meet there on Wednesday, February 4th. They even agreed on a schedule for her debriefings: ten in the morning to three in the afternoon for weekdays, eleven to three on weekends.

With that, the prosecutors faxed a formal immunity agreement to Ginsburg. Written on Office of the Independent Counsel letterhead and dated February 2, 1998, the three-page document said that if Lewinsky testified truthfully "the United States will not prosecute her for any crimes committed prior to the date of this agreement arising out of the facts summarized in [Lewinsky's handwritten] proffer." The agreement also stated that, in return for Monica's truthful testimony, Starr's office would not prosecute Bernard Lewinsky or Marcia Lewis, Monica's mother.

On the last page were spaces for five signatures: Bruce L. Udolf and Mike Emmick, for the Office of the Independent Counsel; and Monica Lewinsky, William Ginsburg, and Nathaniel H. Speights III. Monica and her two lawyers signed their names, faxed the document back to the prosecutors, and completed their plans to fly West in the morning. Lewinsky had every reason to believe that, hours later, she would begin her career as a witness for the prosecution.

ON February 3rd, the prosecutors assembled around the big conference table for a postmortem on the negotiations that had led to the offer of immunity to Lewinsky. Jackie Bennett thought that Emmick and Udolf had wimped out. "It's a sign of weakness," Bennett said.

Bennett asserted that Lewinsky was holding back on them, and that they needed to examine her themselves. The written proffer was inadequate. They were giving away the store to Monica—and to Ginsburg.

The mention of Ginsburg set off a round of groans and denunciations. Bennett and Bittman challenged Starr, who sat through the commentary of his subordinates in silence. Are we going to let this clown push us around?

Emmick and Udolf said little at first. Then, gradually, they began to defend their work in negotiating the immunity deal. Emmick, the smooth Californian, spoke of the need for them to stay focussed. Monica would be a good witness for the prosecution, he said. She would prove conclusively that Clinton had lied under oath about the sex—and, in time, she might turn into a valuable witness on obstruction of justice. Forget Ginsburg, Emmick urged. The point was how best to help their investigation, and Lewinsky was the witness who could do the most for them.

Udolf, however, was so angry that he could barely speak. He loathed the macho posturing of his colleagues. So what if they hated Monica's lawyer? How in the world were they proposing to make a case against Clinton without Lewinsky's testimony? And, anyway, they had a deal. They had sent her the immunity agreement, and she and her lawyers had signed it.

That may be, someone pointed out, but the agreement had been signed only by the defense. The spaces for Emmick's and Udolf's signatures were still blank. There's no contract until both sides sign.

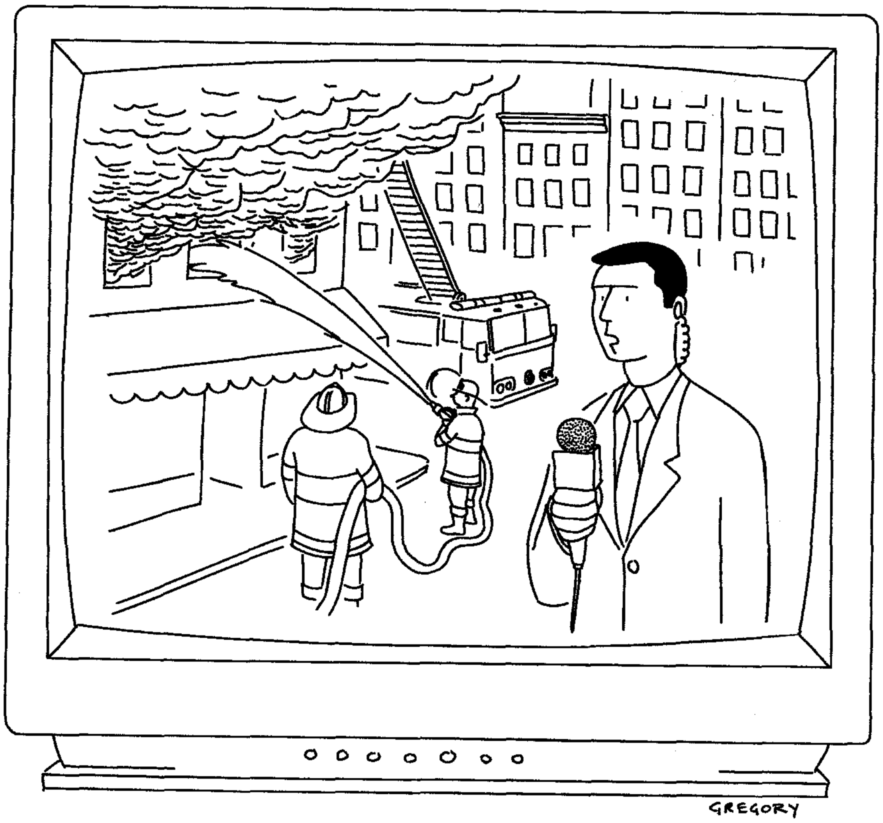
Udolf was outraged. As a technical matter, it may have been true that no enforceable contract existed. But honorable prosecutors did not engage in that kind of niggling. In United States Attorneys' offices around the country, when a prosecutor faxes an immunity agreement to a defense lawyer on government letterhead, that's a deal. "I gave my word as a man and as a lawyer," Udolf said.

In the end, the decision was up to Starr. He decided to go with the view of an overwhelming majority of his staff: he would veto the immunity deal with Lewinsky. Ginsburg was behaving reprehensibly, Starr said. He thought Bennett was right. Lewinsky was probably holding back information damaging to Clinton.

STARR'S decision marked the precise moment when Bill Clinton's survival in office became assured. It had been only eight days since Clinton denied having had sexual relations with "that woman"; if Starr had agreed to the immunity deal on February 3rd, he would have had the evidence—in testimony and in conclusive genetic evidence, a semen-stained dress—to prove that Clinton had deceived the nation. The President's defenders had not yet had time to change the subject—to divert attention to Starr's tactics, to questions of privacy, to the motives of Clinton's accusers. Starr could have had an impeachment report for Congress as early as the end of February; instead, it was delivered to the House in September.

Emmick and Udolf managed a forlorn protest against their boss's decision. They refused to write the letter to Ginsburg informing him that the deal was off. This wasn't much of a problem for Starr, because he had a ready candidate for the task: Bittman. So, on February 4th—the day that Lewinsky's debriefing was scheduled to begin in Los Angeles—Ginsburg received a fax from Washington. "Thank you for your proposed modifications to the draft agreement and the amendments to your client's written proffer," Bittman's letter began. "After carefully evaluating them, we must respectfully decline to enter into an agreement on the proposed terms."

It is somehow fitting that in this drama, played out in the first weeks of the scandal, the President's victory did not come about because of anything he did. Indeed, his own behavior throughout the crisis was marked by dishonesty and self-pity. During this period, Clinton kept in his desk what he called "the Richard Jewell file," named for the former Atlanta security guard who was wrongly suspected of planting a bomb at the Olympics in 1996. Clinton identified with Jewell, and kept in the file



"Luckily, none of the people inside appear to be celebrities."

newspaper articles about what he regarded as the unfair attacks on him.

The President's mood was reflected throughout the White House: this was war; this was "us versus them." One familiar refrain from Clinton supporters during this period was that the Starr investigation and the Jones case had criminalized political disputes. There was much truth in this charge, but it was less often noted that Clinton's defenders replied in kind. In fact, the whole Lewinsky saga reflected a world where the political and legal systems had begun to merge. In this world, it wasn't enough to call your adversaries misguided; they had to be lawbreakers as well.

Sidney Blumenthal, a White House aide and a former journalist (at *The New Republic*, the Washington *Post*, and this magazine, among other publications), quickly asserted himself as one of Clinton's most zealous defenders. His contribution to the defense effort was to take on Starr's staff. Less than forty-eight hours after Starr voided Lewinsky's immunity deal, the fax machine whirred to life next to Blumenthal's office in the former White House barbershop. The faxed message, from Stanley K. Sheinbaum, a veteran liberal activist in California, was a clip from the front page of the Los Angeles *Daily Journal*, a newspaper that serves the legal community in Southern California. "STARR AIDE NO STRANGER TO SEX TAPE INQUIRIES," the headline read, and the story featured Mike Emmick. A little while later, Blumenthal received another fax, this one, from Jack Bass, a historian and journalist based in Atlanta, a column in the *Journal & Constitution*, with the headline "KEN STARR'S TAINTED LIEUTENANT: Georgians Remember Bruce Udolf as a Man Who Trampled a Citizen's Rights; Now He's Investigating the President."

The concept of "opposition research" was a fairly old one in politics but was something new in American law—and its deployment by Blumenthal offered a classic illustration of this merger of law and politics. With "oppo," a political candidate attempts to learn embarrassing information about an opponent and uses the news media to inform a wider public. In more genteel days, even as recently as the Iran-Contra affair, no one thought to go after prosecutors in this way. But there were new rules of engagement now.

Blumenthal's oppo was such an organic process that it didn't even require a formal mobilization. The troops simply knew their roles and went to work. They assumed that Blumenthal was going to try to multiply these local stories into broader and more sustained critical attention to the Starr team—which was exactly what he did. Blumenthal sent the material to the Democratic National Committee, where the fruits of his media research were distilled into talking points, and directed reporters to the resulting product. By his own account, Blumenthal sent to the D.N.C. reporters from "news organizations ranging from CNN, CBS, ABC, New York *Times*, New York *Daily News*, Chicago *Tribune*, New York *Observer*, Los Angeles *Times*."

By mid-February, many of the reporters covering the story needed a new angle, and the professional background of the President's pursuers made an ideal sidebar. Calls from reporters about the prosecutors flooded into Starr's offices, and not just about their job histories, either. Journalists dredged up rumors about drug use, sexual orientation, divorces, and school records, which the stunned prosecutors tried to dismiss as best they could. Blumenthal later likened his role to that of the sorcerer's apprentice. All he had meant to do, he said, was raise a few questions about some controversial cases on the public record. Could he help it if those legitimate issues spiralled into something much more vicious and personal? He was, he explained, very sad about what happened to the prosecutors.

Blumenthal's oppo attack on Emmick never bothered Emmick very much. It concerned a case that he hadn't even prosecuted, so he dismissed the tempest as "water off a duck's back," a phrase he used often in those days. Bruce Udolf was taking it harder. For one thing, he had a bigger skeleton in his closet. Udolf had become an elected district attorney in a suburban Atlanta county at the young age of thirty, and on March 17, 1985—when he was thirty-three—had made a big mistake. Agents of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation arrested a carpenter named Ronald Reeves for possessing a stolen gun—which was not, it turned out, stolen at all. Still, Udolf and the agents held him for twenty-four hours before he had a chance to talk to a lawyer, and then they recommended that his bond be set at an unconscionable hundred thousand dollars. Reeves was detained for five days before he was finally allowed to go home, with no charges filed against him. He later sued Udolf and others in connection with the incident, and ultimately Georgia taxpayers were obliged to cover a fifty-thousand-dollar judgment.

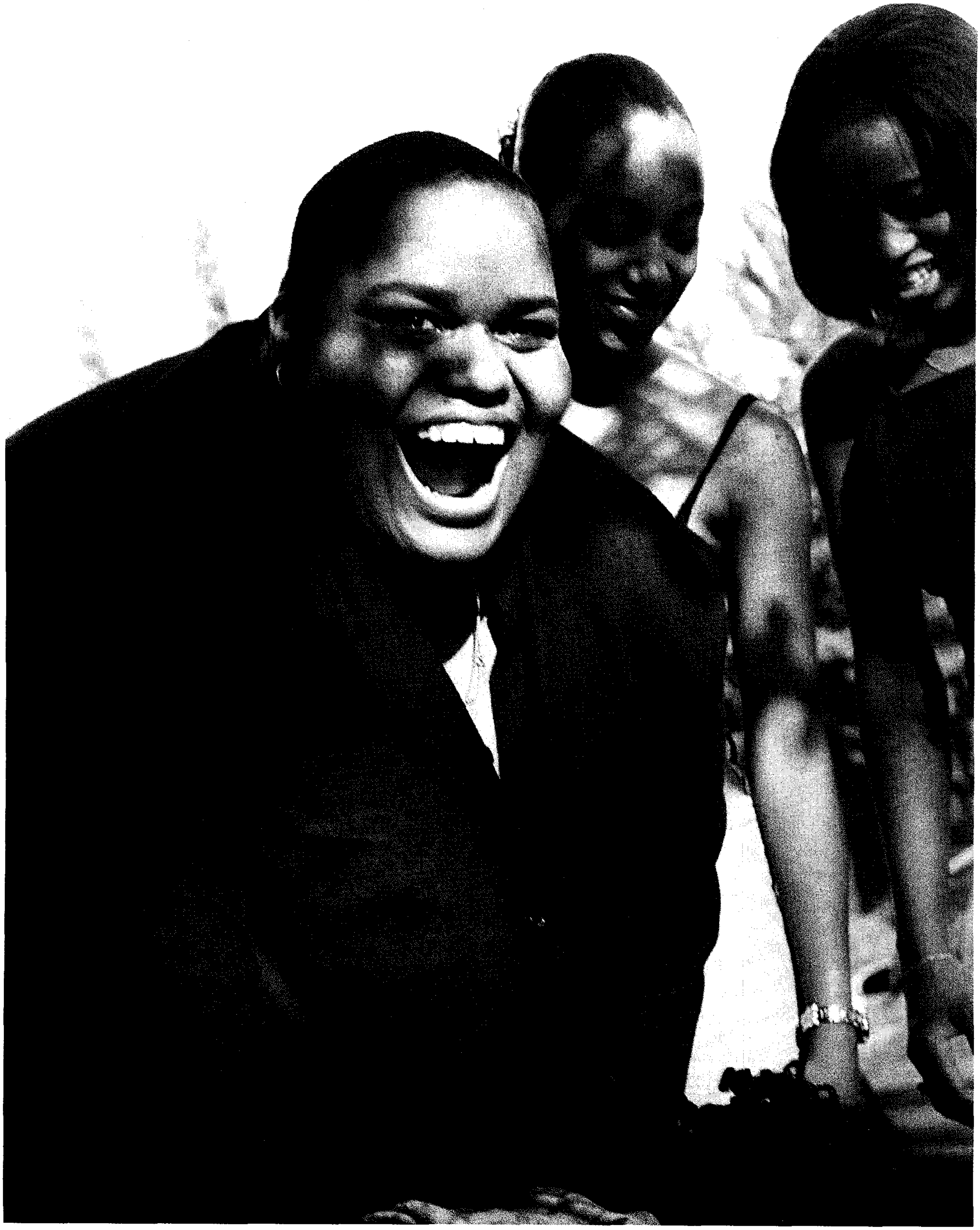
It was a costly and embarrassing lesson, and the voters turned Udolf out of office. He decided to move to Miami and, in effect, start his legal career over again. This Udolf did, with some help from one of his adversaries in the Reeves case who thought the prosecutor had behaved honorably in sorting out the mess. However, Udolf knew that, in the fevered atmosphere of Washington, his decade of impeccable service in the United States Attorney's office would count little against this black mark.

For Udolf, the Blumenthal oppo offensive was torture. While he was berated in the press as a tough guy, he was scorned by his colleagues as a coward. Not long after the Lewinsky story broke, Craig Lerner, a mid-level member of Starr's team, put up a hand-scrawled chart in his office on which prosecutors

REAGONOMICS

During a recent performance of some songs from her new album, "The Righteous Ones," the Brooklyn-based singer Toshi Reagon (far left, with two of her nieces), whose mother is Bernice Johnson Reagon, of Sweet Honey in the Rock, paused between numbers to name three artists whose music she'd want along if she were stuck on a desert island. "My mother's, of course, and Bob Marley, and Joni Mitchell. If I could have another one," she added, with a laugh, "it'd be Metallica." She and her seven-piece band, Big Lovely, showered the audience with a wild mixture of funk, urban blues, and folk, building to fierce crescendos during which Reagon wailed and swung her head in hypnotic circles. "When you enter a Toshi Reagon show," she likes to tell the audience, "you are mine. You will leave a little bit different." This week, she'll possess the crowd at Shine, in Tribeca.

Photograph by Dana Lixenberg



were rated for their toughness. The chart thus became a kind of Dow Jones index for perceived manliness. (The Starr office was staffed almost entirely by men.) In the "Likud" column, the names included David Barger and Sol Wisenberg, who were close allies of Bennett and Bittman. (Among his Jewish colleagues, Wisenberg was sometimes referred to as "the most conservative Jew in America.") Emmick and Udolf ("Commie wimps," according to the chart) were among those at the other extreme. As for the purported reason for Udolf's lack of confidence, someone wrote "lawsuit." In other words, the perception was that Udolf had backed down because he was intimidated by the disclosure of the Reeves case.

Udolf's internal exile in Starr's office came about only because he wanted to give Monica Lewinsky immunity, which, Bennett and Bittman notwithstanding, was the only real way to get to Bill Clinton. The irony, of course, was that Bennett and Bittman—not Udolf and Emmick—helped Clinton survive.

Udolf had another responsibility—to help put Monica's mother in front of the grand jury on February 10th and 11th. It was a degrading two days, and the office was pummelled in the press for forcing a mother to testify against her daughter. Late on the second afternoon, Emmick asked a series of questions about the word "Babba," which was how Monica, in her conversations with Linda Tripp, had referred to Hillary Clinton.

"Has your daughter ever referred to Hillary Clinton as 'Babba'?"

"I don't remember that," Lewis said.

"All right," Emmick went on. "Then let me ask you this. Is there a Yiddish phrase for grandmother that sounds something like 'Babba' or 'Bubba' or something like that?"

"I think there is, yes."

"All right. What is that phrase?"

"I think it's 'Bubba'?"

" 'Bubba.' All right," said Emmick.

"But I'm not sure," Lewis went on. "I don't speak Yiddish."

At this point, Sol Wisenberg took over the questioning.

"Have you ever referred to anybody to your knowledge as 'Babba' or 'the Babba'?" he asked.

"Yes," Lewis replied.

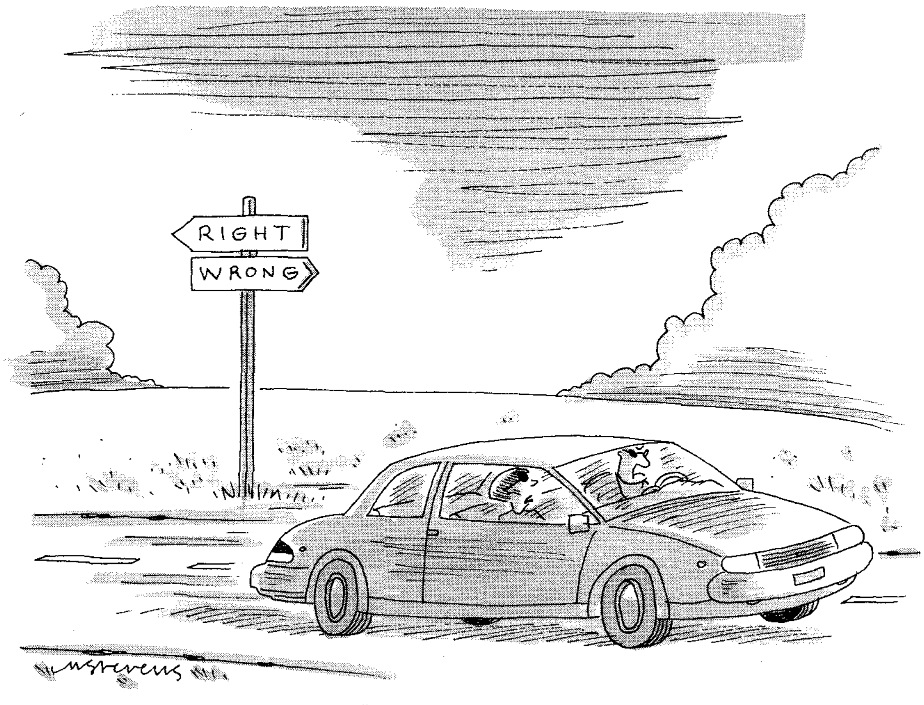
"O.K. And who would that be?"

"Oh, it's just a silly family thing we say," Lewis replied. "It's not— It has nothing to do with this. It's just—like our grandmother. We used to call her Babba."

"O.K.," Wisenberg went on. "But it's your family—different families have variations of Grandma, Grandmother, Granny, and, as I understand it, that was your family's variation of the grandmother? Is that correct?"

"I think so, yes," Lewis said, but then she broke down in tears and couldn't go on.

Udolf stepped in and walked Marcia Lewis out of the grand-jury room. He delivered her to her lawyer, went back to his colleagues, and said, in effect, This is it. She can't continue. Let's shut this down.



"You are so stubborn."

To Udolf, the situation had become absurd. The office seemed to prefer tormenting Lewis about Bubbas and Babbas to doing the one thing that would bring the case to an expeditious conclusion: make a deal with her daughter.

The stress of the past month began to affect Udolf's health; soon after Lewis's grand-jury testimony, he found himself in the hospital with pneumonia. Udolf never really returned to Starr's office. Bob Bittman absorbed most of his responsibilities. There was, Udolf decided, more to life than the Lewinsky case. Back in Florida, he had a wife and daughter he adored, and he was weary of commuting. When he quit the Office of the Independent Counsel, no one called it a resignation in protest, but, basically, that was what it was.

After spending his entire legal career as a prosecutor, Udolf signed up as a partner in a private law firm in Miami. He and his wife thought about adopting a child, and Udolf brought his résumé to a meeting with an adoption counsellor. "The Starr office," the counsellor mused as she studied Udolf's qualifications to be a father. "You weren't involved in the abuses there, were you?"

On April 24, 1998, Monica Lewinsky stood on a Malibu beach wearing magenta peacock feathers and not much else. In photographs by Herb Ritts, which were eventually published in *Vanity Fair*, she looked as if she were alone on the windswept sand, but there was actually a sizable crowd watching. Bill Ginsburg was supervising, Nate Speights had come West for the occasion, and Monica's father, a serious amateur photographer, and his wife were on hand, too. Counting makeup artists, lighting designers, and a security guard watching over six hundred thousand dollars in borrowed jewelry, there were more than a dozen people observing Monica strike one suggestive pose after another.

As should have been apparent to anyone (especially to her lawyers), the photo extravaganza was a terrible idea.

Ginsburg and the family justified the session in the New Age babble that was the Lewinsky family's lingua franca: Ritts's attentions were said to boost the young woman's "self-esteem." But when the photographs were published, and the inevitable condemnations of Monica followed, Marcia Lewis and her ex-husband blamed Ginsburg for allowing the project to go forward, and decided that he should be removed from the case.

On June 2nd, two well-connected Washington lawyers, Jacob Stein and Plato Cacheris, officially replaced Ginsburg. Both men were known for cutting deals for their clients, and that, of course, was what Monica hoped they would do for her—at last.

DURING the summer of 1998, Richard Gephardt, the Democratic leader in the House, sent a blunt message to the President: If you expect the continued support of your party in the House, you must testify under oath. After Starr finally subpoenaed Clinton, on July 17th, the President's lawyer David Kendall informed Bittman that his client would not challenge the summons on constitutional grounds and would testify voluntarily before the grand jury.

The prospect of Clinton's testimony prompted Starr to call Jacob Stein and suggest that they meet on July 23rd, for breakfast, at the Chevy Chase home of his ethics adviser, Samuel Dash. At that meeting, Lewinsky's lawyers finally agreed to let her talk to the prosecutors—that is, to make an oral proffer, as it was known—and the session was set for four days later, in New York, where there would be less press scrutiny than in Washington. They would meet in what Starr called "Grandma's" apartment—his mother-in-law's place—on East Fifty-sixth Street. Tell the truth, her lawyers instructed her, and you're home free.

On the appointed day, Lewinsky arrived at Grandma's with her team—Stein, Cacheris, and Sydney Hoffmann, a part-time colleague of Cacheris's, whom he had brought on to handle the detailed debriefings of his client. ("I didn't want to listen to who blew who," Cacheris said later.) Lewinsky dazzled the prosecutors with her memory. When she discussed having breakfast with Vernon Jordan, she remembered where and what they ate—and the name of the waiter.

At about two-thirty, Cacheris saw that Lewinsky's energy was starting to flag, and he said he thought they should stop. The lawyers on both sides retreated to discuss their next steps. "We need another day to question her," Bittman said.

Cacheris exploded. "If you don't have the story by now, you'll never have it!" He said that they could talk to her again only if they gave her a full immunity agreement.

Bittman smiled and said, "You mean a signed agreement?"—a joking reference to the unsigned February 2nd document that had caused both sides so much distress. (Ginsburg had actually sued Starr, claiming that the unsigned immunity agreement was binding, but the court rejected the argument.) Cacheris and Bittman parted on friendly terms.

The next day, in Washington, Lewinsky signed an immunity agreement, making her officially a government witness. That was July 28, 1998—precisely a hundred and seventy-six days since Bruce Udolf had concluded his immunity agreement with Bill Ginsburg. Lewinsky's recitation in Grandma's living room was substantively identical to the version she wrote out by hand in the Cosmos Club. The delay of nearly half a year had cost the Office of the Independent Counsel a great deal. At the time the scandal broke, there might have been a moment when exposure of the President's lies could have driven him from office. But, as the months wore on, the country increasingly began to see Starr as a man with a vendetta, and the Lewinsky case as more banal than criminal—as, at its heart, the story of a humiliated middle-aged husband who lied when he was caught having an affair with a young woman from the office. Like many of Clinton's enemies, Starr had held out in the hope that conclusive evidence of real criminality would somehow emerge. But this evidence was never located; it didn't exist.

Last month, Kenneth Starr announced that he would step down as independent counsel; in the next few weeks, his staff will throw him a goodbye party. Clinton, of course, will stay in office until January 20, 2001, having survived this extraordinary collision between law and politics. The President's problems with Congress, his pursuers, and the judgment of history endure. He will, however, have the satisfaction of knowing that he outlasted his nemesis. ♦

"This _is_ *Daddy, honey. That was Daddy's office voice."*

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

WOODY'S DREAM

Nobody knew how the ancient Clovis hunters created their brilliant artifacts—except for one man, and nobody wanted to believe him.

BY DOUGLAS PRESTON

THE greatest human hunters to walk the planet may have been the Clovis, a mysterious people who appeared abruptly in North America about thirteen thousand years ago. The Clovis were among the first of our species on this continent to develop weaponry that allowed them to go one on one against big, dangerous game. Their favored prey was the Columbian mammoth, the largest land animal that *Homo sapiens* has ever hunted in the New World. It stood as high as thirteen feet at the shoulder, weighed between eight and nine tons, and could run perhaps twenty-five or thirty miles an hour. It was fifty per cent heavier than the African elephant, which is today a dangerous animal to hunt even with a high-calibre rifle. Like the elephant, a provoked mammoth probably slashed at and gored its assailant with its tusks; trampled, crushed, and battered him with its head; and, picking up what was left, flailed him about until the pieces flew apart in bloody gobbets.

The Clovis hunters stalked mammoths with two particularly lethal weapons. The first, a thrusting spear, was for close-in work. The second may have been an atlatl—a spear launched with a throwing stick. (The bow and arrow weren't invented until thousands of years later.) Both types of Clovis spears were tipped with a long, tapered projectile point flaked from stone. The Clovis point was beautifully designed to kill a mammoth. Viciously sharp, and unlikely to break against the hide, it tore a big hole in the tissue and caused heavy blood loss. Every time the mammoth took a step after being hit, the point would saw and slice the flesh.

How the Clovis hunted mammoths is disputed. They may have waited until a young animal strayed from its family group, hit it with a few atlatls, and followed it until it died. They also may have killed a full-grown mammoth by getting up beside it and shoving spear after spear through the rib cage into the vital organs. Either way, a mammoth took a lot of killing: one skeleton, found in southern Arizona, had eight Clovis points in its body—and that mammoth may have been one that got away.

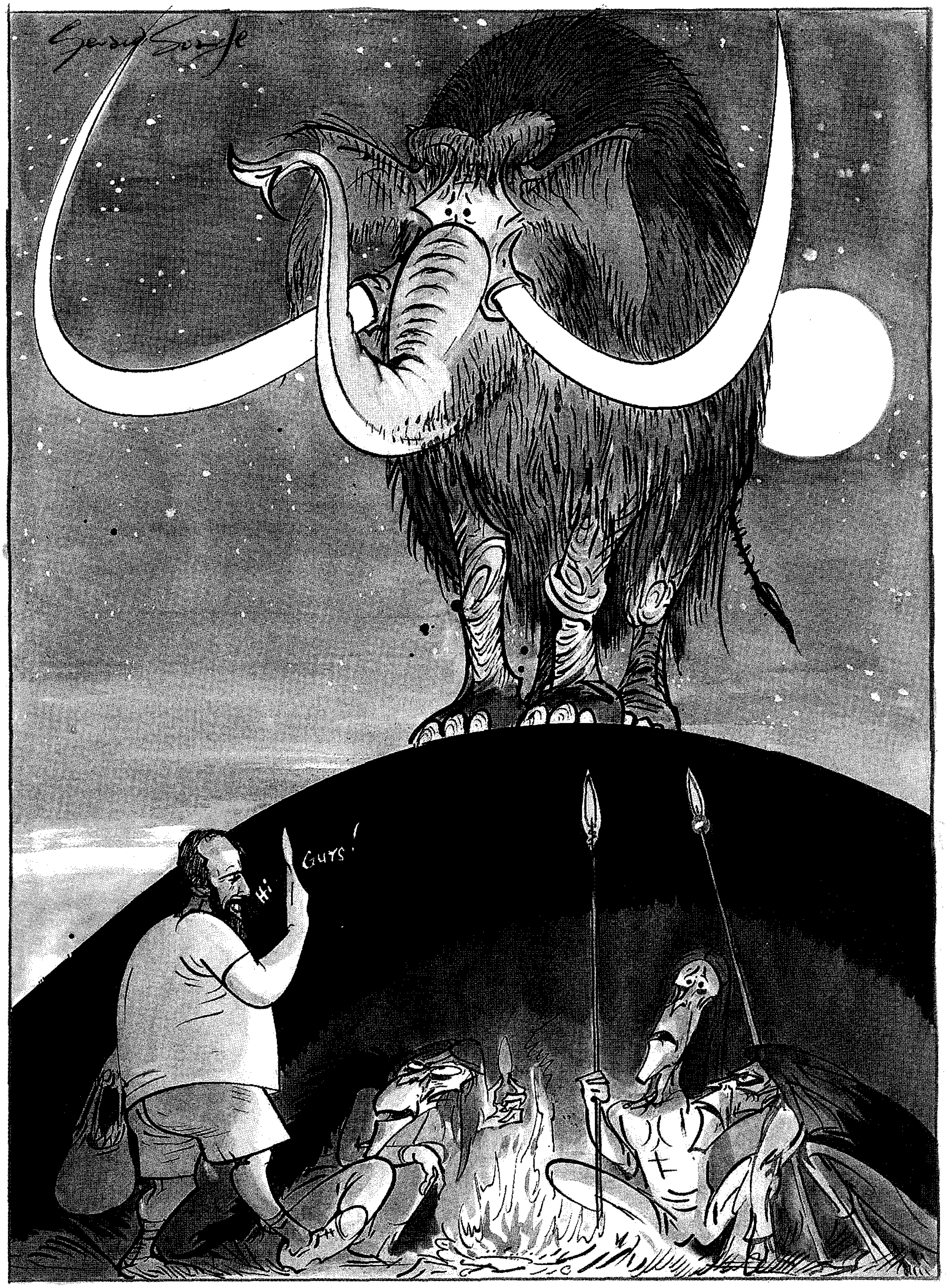
The Clovis travelled hundreds of miles to find gorgeous, semi-precious stones suitable for their points: translucent agate, chert, smoky-quartz crystal, red jasper, obsidian. These stones were not just beautiful to look at; when knapped (chipped), they formed keen edges and glossy flake scars that were almost silky to the touch. To make pleasing flake patterns on the stones' points, the weapons producers used a technique that the French call *outré passé*, or overshot flaking. To carry out this exceedingly difficult procedure, the edge of the stone was struck in such a way that a long flake, shaped like a scimitar, travelled all the way across the face of the spearpoint. Sometimes the Clovis knapped the stone on the diagonal, for further decorative effect. When you hold a fine Clovis projectile point—maybe five inches long, leaflike, cool, deadly, balanced, luminous—you know that you are holding something more than a tool. It reaches beyond the utilitarian into the realm of aesthetics—each, like a piece of Shaker furniture, is an object made with skill, love, simplicity, and faith.

About nine or ten thousand years ago, the Clovis and their Paleo-American descendants disappeared—no one knows how or why—and the high art of stone-knapping disappeared with them. Nothing like it was achieved again for thousands of years. Even today, flint-knappers cannot re-create a Clovis point perfectly. Clovis points are rare, sexy, and extremely valuable.

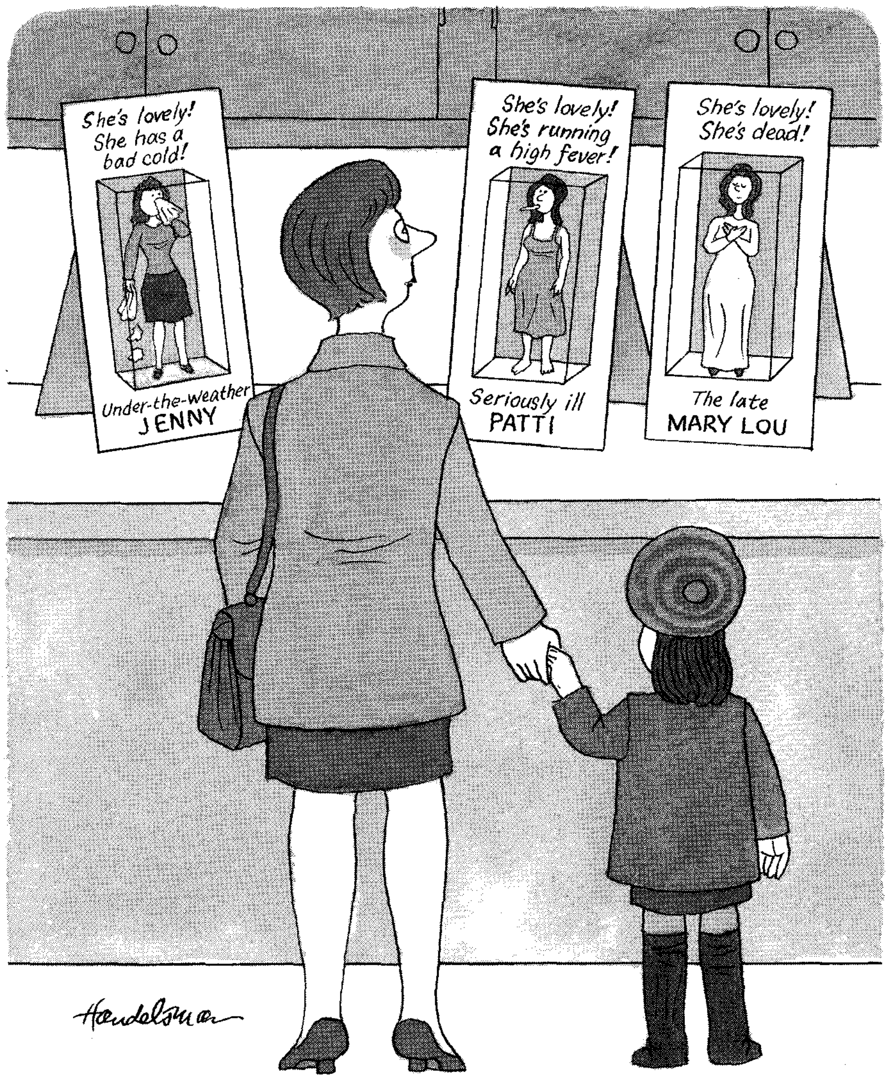
ONE of the world's foremost collectors of these artifacts is a trim Texan named Forrest Fenn. Now in his sixties, Fenn, a former Air Force pilot who was shot down over Laos during the Vietnam War, lives in Santa Fe, in a large house hidden behind adobe walls. Wagon ruts from the Santa Fe Trail run across his back yard. In the early seventies, Fenn started the first major art gallery in Santa Fe, and he was the dealer who established Santa Fe as an international art market. Fenn sold the gallery in 1988, and has since spent most of his time publishing books and excavating an ancient five-thousand-room Indian ruin he owns outside the city. He has never outgrown a boyish passion for Indian artifacts, fossils, bones, and arrowheads. His hoard of Clovis points is one of the most outstanding private collections in the nation.

One day last fall, Fenn, who is a neighbor and an old friend of mine, called me up. Nine months earlier, he said, he had bought three Clovis points from an antique dealer based in Rollins, Montana, for fifteen thousand dollars. Then, a few weeks ago, the dealer had arrived on his doorstep with nine more, and wanted to sell them for a hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars. Eventually, the dealer dropped the price to eighty-five thousand—an excellent figure—and Fenn took the points on approval. He invited me over to see them.

Fenn's various collections are displayed around his office—a fossil skull of a giant short-faced cave bear, a mummified falcon from Egypt, old Indian pots, beaded moccasins, arrowheads, peace pipes, tomahawks. I found him at his kitchen table, with the twelve spear points spread out on black velvet. They ranged from three inches long to almost seven. Most were


Gerald Scarfe
Hi
GUYS!

When he got close, he could see that the things were big, beautiful Clovis points. Illustration by Gerald Scarfe.


She's lovely! She has a bad cold!
Under-the-weather JENNY
She's lovely! She's running a high fever!
Seriously ill PATTI
She's lovely! She's dead!
The late MARY LOU
Handelsman

made of chert or jasper; two had been flaked from pure quartz crystal. The points, the dealer told him, had been found near Greeley, Colorado, in the nineteen-twenties, by a ranch foreman named Tom Jenson; most of them had turned up recently, after Jenson's death, stashed inside his house.

"When I first saw those points," Fenn said, "I felt like Dr. What's-His-Face when he looked through that hole and saw King Tut lying in his sarcophagus." In particular, Fenn felt that the longer quartz-crystal point was surely one of the greatest Clovis artifacts ever found. The points bore a strong resemblance to the celebrated Drake points, a cache of thirteen spear points found twenty years ago in a wheat field in the same part of Colorado. (Most of those are now in the Smithsonian.) Fenn wondered if these points might have come from the same cache—and perhaps have even been flaked by the same Clovis artist. If so, that would make them still more important. The points also appeared to bear minute traces of red ochre, which is a kind of iron oxide; the Clovis, for unknown reasons, often packed caches of their points in this material.

Fenn told me that two of the world's foremost authorities on the Clovis—George Frison and Robson Bonnichsen—had just come to see the points. Frison, a professor emeritus at the University of Wyoming, which has named its George C. Frison Institute of Archeology and Anthropology after him, is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and is the top authority on Clovis hunting. Bonnichsen is the director of the Center for the Study of the First Americans, at Oregon State University. Both men loved the points. "When I first saw them, I thought they were wonderful," Frison told me later. "I couldn't believe that crystal point: it looked perfect." Bonnichsen also believed that the points were genuine. "Not only was the form of the artifacts right," he said, "but the technology was right"—the points had been made using Clovis flaking and reduction techniques.

Fenn had sent the first three points to an authenticator—Calvin Howard, in Springfield, Illinois—and Howard examined the points using visual, optical, microscopic, and ultraviolet tests. Howard said that although there was no foolproof way to verify the points' authenticity he was nevertheless willing to declare them authentic—to "paper" them, in the jargon of the trade. In this field, authentication often hinges on subjective judgment. These points *looked* right. No modern flint-knapper, it was generally believed, had ever been able to replicate the Clovis touch. Even so, the sheer brilliance of the points gave Fenn pause, for only once in a generation did Clovis points as good as these appear. For a hundred thousand dollars, he had to be sure. "I climbed in my airplane," he told me later, "and took these things to Idabel, Oklahoma, through terrible rainstorms." He wanted to show them to Gregory Perino, an eighty-five-year-old man who, he said, "probably knows more about Indian artifacts than anybody else alive" and could definitively authenticate them. When Perino saw the Clovis points, he, too, was impressed, though he noted some red clayey material on the points which made him slightly uneasy. The one thing he didn't like was a microscopic film he detected on their surface, which looked like Teflon. But this didn't cause him undue concern, since many collectors oil or wax their points. The presence of the film troubled Fenn, however. He sent one of the points—and, later, all of them—to Kenneth Tankersley, an assistant professor of anthropology at Kent State University, in Ohio, who is an expert on microscopic and chemical analysis of Paleo points.

"They were absolutely breathtaking—spectacular," Tankersley told me. "There was no question in my mind that this was the Clovis technology. My words to Forrest were 'This is as good as gold.'" Fenn asked Tankersley to run a battery of tests anyway.

At the same time, other extraordinary Paleo projectile points began to appear on the market. Made by descendants of the Clovis, who hunted a large buffalo, *Bison antiquus* (now extinct), the points were impeccably designed for penetrating the skin of that shaggy, muscular animal. Usually thinner, shorter, and smoother, these later point styles have been given such names as Folsom, Alberta, Scottsbluff, Firstview, Dalton, and Eden, after the places where they were originally found. One of the country's top dealers in Paleo points—Jeb Taylor, of Buffalo, Wyoming—bought three that were on the market: an Alberta and two Folsoms. "The Alberta point was absolutely right," he told me recently. "It really struck me as being unfakable." (Taylor had had the points authenticated, just to be sure.) He paid six thousand for the large Folsom, three thousand for the Alberta, and fifteen hundred for the other Folsom—all excellent prices. Taylor sold the lesser Folsom for thirty-five hundred, the Alberta for sixty-five hundred, and kept the larger, and better, Folsom point for himself.

Toward the end of 1998, Forrest Fenn got a call from Kenneth Tankersley, who was in the middle of his battery of tests. He had uncovered a number of problems. For one thing, the red ochre on some of the points was too bright: usually, an iron-eating microbe degrades the ochre over time, mellowing the color. The other points were stained not with ochre but, suspiciously, with red dirt. (The particular points that Calvin Howard had examined were not stained.) Looking through a microscope, Tankersley could see tiny flakes still adhering to the stone—flakes that should have popped off after thirteen thousand years of freezing and thawing. Even more problematic, he told Fenn, were the two quartz-crystal points: the quartz had rutilation (embedded crystal hairs), which strongly suggested that the stone came from Brazil. He asked Fenn for permission to perform more extensive chemical tests. Fenn granted it.

Tankersley examined the film that was coating the points. He rubbed a flake scar on each point with a Q-Tip dipped in solvent, teased a bit of the coating off, and viewed it under ultraviolet light. It appeared to be some kind of modern petrochemical derivative—dirty motor oil, he guessed. "I thought, What if the discoverer was out in a tractor and dumped them in the back, where there was oil? I wanted to make absolutely sure. Two of the top people in the country, Robson Bonnichsen and George Frison, had seen the points, and the points had looked good to them. These are two colleagues very senior to me. For me to say, 'Wait a minute, these are fakes!' I wanted to have the kind of evidence that you would need in a court of law for a murder case—beyond a reasonable doubt." One of the points was made of a material that Tankersley recognized as Knife River flint. This flint has a distinctive property: when it is freshly flaked, it usually fluoresces yellow under long-wavelength ultraviolet light, but if the flaking is very old it tends to fluoresce orange or green. Tankersley cleaned one flake scar and hit it with UV light. The scar fluoresced yellow.

"One of the hardest things I ever had to do," Tankersley told me, "was to call Forrest on the telephone and tell him, 'I think these are fakes.'"

Fenn remembers the conversation vividly. "I felt like the director of the Louvre when scientists tell him that the Mona Lisa is a fake," he said. "These were the Mona Lisa of points."

Fenn, of course, immediately began to wonder who might have faked them. He didn't have to think long.

WOODY BLACKWELL lives in a small bungalow in Warner Robins, Georgia. He drives a cheap Toyota truck and has what he calls a "frugal" life style. He was once a counterintelligence specialist in the Air Force, and he still looks it: a fit man of forty-two, he is neat in appearance, stocky, and wears a close-cropped beard in the winter months. He carries himself with a military bearing, and his words are straightforward and precise.

When Blackwell was seven, he was digging with some friends one day in his back yard, in Millbrook, Alabama, and discovered an arrowhead—his first. "It was as if a switch was flipped," he told me recently. Ever since, he said, he has been obsessed with flint-knapping. "Our species and others like it have been banging on rocks for two and a half million years. It's only in the last couple thousand that we've been doing something else. When you rediscover it—that feeling of banging on rocks—you *have* to do it. It's almost a need. Maybe it's genetic."

His first attempts at knapping were a disaster. "My tool kit consisted of a sixteenpenny nail and a piece of a brick," he re-

"From right to left, you have your tekkamaki, your futomaki, and then your yamaimo roll. The little pile of pink stuff is ginger, the green one's wasabi. And, of course, you already recognize your vodka Martini."

called. "I just gouged up my hands and lost a couple of fingernails and made a mess of things."

Nine years ago, when Blackwell was still in the Air Force, he fell in with some Texas flint-knappers and took up the hobby seriously. He joined what is in America a perfervid subculture. In the nineteen-seventies, knapping was a rarefied hobby: its few aficionados would get together on Sundays to trade techniques about the lost art. By the time Blackwell got involved, it had become something of a craze. Now there are more than a hundred "knap-ins" around the country every year, and some are attended by thousands of people. At one recent knap-in, in Missouri, participants consumed twenty truckloads of rock as they created countless arrowheads. There are dozens of Web sites devoted to the hobby. D. C. Waldorf, who was an early enthusiast, has sold more than forty thousand copies of a book he wrote in 1975 entitled "The Art of Flint Knapping." There are thousands of knappers now working around the country, turning out an estimated million and a half stone points and tools every year. A recent article in the journal *American Antiquity* said that this country is experiencing "a twentieth-century stone age."

Knappers, it must be said, command almost no respect in the archeological world. Most experts, if they think of flint-knappers at all, think of redneck hobbyists pounding rocks in the back woods or of people who stock cheesy Indian souvenir shops at gas stations along the highways of the West. Knapping is hardly considered a craft, let alone a fine art.

Nevertheless, over the past four years Blackwell eked out an income as a professional flint-knapper, selling replica points for fifty or a hundred dollars apiece. It's a poor way to make a living: in his best year, 1996, Blackwell grossed less than twenty-two thousand dollars. Sleazy dealers often bought points from him. He sometimes saw his own replicas doctored up to look old and displayed at arrowhead shows as authentic artifacts worth hundreds, or even thousands, of dollars more than he had sold them for.

From the beginning, Blackwell revered Clovis points. He collected originals, and when he couldn't afford to buy real points he acquired museum-quality casts. He travelled around the West, collecting the same stone that the Clovis used. He looked at the Drake Cache, at the Smithsonian, and at other Clovis caches, and, through trial-and-error experimentation, deduced complex Clovis flaking and reduction techniques. He grew intimate with all facets of Paleo technology: its polyhedral cores, bifacial flaking, preforms, spalls, and isolated platforms. And then he began to reverse-engineer the Clovis point.

"There is a feel about old Clovis points," he told me recently. "They aren't fussed over. They are everything they need to be, and nothing more." Blackwell also began reverse-engineering other styles of Paleo points: Folsom, Alberta, Scottsbluff, Firstview, and Eden. If anything, these points are even more difficult to copy than Clovis points are. (Some of the minor details of pressure-flaking on an Eden or a Folsom point, for example, can be seen only with a microscope.) "They are sublimely functional," Blackwell said. "And yet the beauty, the workmanship, the artistry is so far past the function that it's almost religious. They're no longer just a sharp edge to stuff inside a buffalo. Those guys made the most incredible pieces you can imagine. And I think I've figured out how."

It takes Blackwell two or three hours to make a Clovis point, and up to eight hours to make an Eden point. Many break, and many others are aesthetic failures. Moreover, knapping points is a dangerous business: almost every point will draw its maker's blood. About once a month, Blackwell cuts himself deeply enough to need stitches, but instead of getting them he stops the bleeding with spiderwebs used as a styptic (a folk remedy from his Southern boyhood), or just superglues the wound shut.

In 1994, Blackwell began sending his replicas to museums and archeologists, and offering to share with them what he had rediscovered about Paleo-American stone technology. Most never bothered to respond. One museum asked him to make two hundred Clovis replicas for twenty dollars each, a price that would hardly pay for the cost of his stone. It became clear to him that he had dedicated his life to an unremunerative muse.

A few years ago—Blackwell says he can't remember exactly when—he was working on a Clovis point, using a favorite Clovis material: Alibates chert, from Texas. After a few hours, he paused to examine his work. He says that he had nothing sinister in mind. "I just stopped

THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

To sit on a balcony, fattened by lap robes and a fur pouch,
with the columbines nodding in their earthen pots
and the weighted autumn moon
already casting to the balustrade

a rim of tepid frost, is to know to the bones
the crepuscular slumber of bats—
alit between seasons of dawn and day, day and dusk,
and everything turning, perpetually. . . .

This evening's soup was studded with cloves—
brown pods and corollas—the diminutive heads of sunflowers.
To my left, in a neighboring balcony window,
a young man is dying, face turned to the ceiling,
his red chin beard sparse and pointed. He is joined
by a woman with a parchment fan, although I see only

her hand and cuff, the curve of a damask sleeve.
And a sky of rootless willows, gray, yellow-green,
pleated in parchment, swaying a little as the hand sways,
folding at last to a single stem. And then a sleight

of magic comes: from the fan's handle
a face is formed, spar by closing spar.
Egyptian, I think. The hooded eyes. The slender beard.
Each spar tucks down to its thin contribution,
earlobe or cheekbone, a slice of brow—
and there! one full-blown, ivory face, perfect
on her damask knees.

Now the bats are aloft, stroking in pairs past the pallid moon.
Once, in the twilit dust of the X-ray room,
I saw on the screen a human lung,
abundant and veined as a willow.

In his bed the young man is stirring, and the woman
has lifted her parchment fan, the ivory face
shining a moment in the facets of lamplight

before its surrender to gray, yellow-green.
And which is the better, I wonder?
To gather from parts such a fullness?
Or to part into fullness so breathtakingly?

—Linda Bierds

and looked at this piece and said, 'That really looks like a Drake-style Clovis if I stop right here.' Until then, I had always kept going, cleaning up the edges, making the point smoother, getting the symmetry dead on, and really dressing the thing up. What I'd been losing was its immediacy, its simplicity." The Drake point is lovely and distinctive: long, narrow, almost parallel-sided, with multiple "fluting"—long vertical flakes struck from the base.

During the following month, Blackwell made two more Drake points, again striving for simplicity and avoiding carrying the work too far. For inspiration, he reflected on his ancient predecessors. "I tried to get in their heads. What were their ideals? And I tried to re-create that." He noticed that these points, too, were very, very good.

Drawing on an encyclopedic knowledge of Clovis points, he added small, verisimilitudinous details. He ground off the sharp edges around the base of each point—something that the Clovis had done to keep the stone from cutting through the sinew used in hafting and to prevent breaking. He sawed through heavy leather and through antler bone with the points, to simulate the edge wear caused by the killing and butchering of mammoths. He then resharpened some of the dulled points, just as the Clovis would have done.

Blackwell had achieved a certain kind of perfection; these were small masterpieces. Museum curators might scoff at him, but, as Blackwell said to me later, the finest Clovis artist "would have been entirely happy to strap one of these on his foreshaft and go kill a mammoth."

It was the next step that proved Blackwell's undoing. For all the points' brilliant workmanship, Blackwell realized, they still looked new. As an experiment—still without nefarious motives, he says—he decided to age them artificially. He put them, along with some dirt from his back yard, in a tumbler—a motorized drum that turns stones for polishing. He let the tumbler rotate with the dirt for two or three days. (Unbeknownst to Blackwell, it appears that the plastic lining of the drum shed hydrocarbons into the mixture, giving the points a Teflon-like coat.) When the points came out, some of them still looked a little bright. Blackwell rubbed a small amount of potassium permanganate on them, to darken them, and he smeared red ochre on some points—ochre that he had collected from the Bear Mouth ochre deposit, in Montana, on one of his trips. When that ran out, he substituted red Georgia dirt similar in appearance but chemically different.

The "old" points sat around in his shop for weeks while his financial troubles mounted. "I was desperate," he says. In late 1997, by his account, he first began mentioning the points in passing to collectors and dealers. "I really don't know when or why or how I decided to do it," he says. "I just started talking to guys. I don't know if I was trying to work up the nerve to do something with them or trying to talk myself out of it. I just asked around, saying, 'I've got three Clovis points, two good ones, and one little beat-up guy. How much could I get?' And they said, 'Oh! Where *are* they? Let's see the pictures!' And it took on a life of its own. I don't want to give myself an out here. But there were guys who were all but reaching through the phone line and grabbing me to pull me into their living rooms. These guys are rabid. It's like they need their next fix."

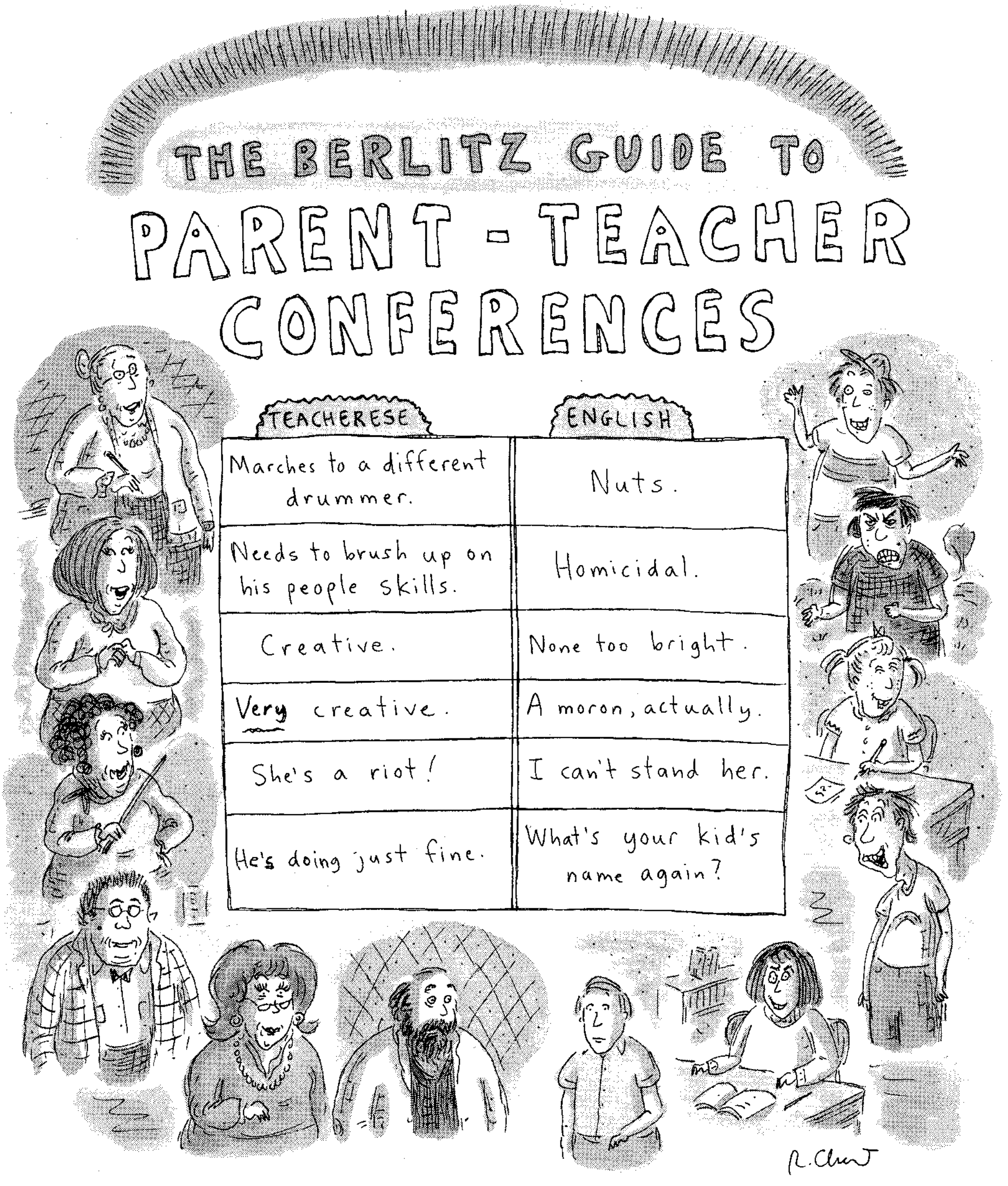
In late March of 1998, Blackwell ran into Forrest Fenn at an arrowhead show in Collinsville, Illinois, and mentioned that he knew a man in Montana, an antique dealer, who supposedly had some Clovis points for sale. Knowing that Fenn might not buy points from a knapper, Blackwell had arranged for this friend to front for him. (Everyone agrees that the antique dealer was duped by Blackwell; the man has a severe heart condition, and I was asked not to mention his name in the article for fear of giving him a heart attack.) Fenn snapped them up, paying the antique dealer fifteen thousand dollars and giving Blackwell an additional fifteen hundred dollars as a "finder's fee." This was such easy money that Blackwell quickly began flaking nine more points to sell to Fenn.

Blackwell says that he wanted his points to be the "heartbeat" of Fenn's collection—a tall order when you consider that Fenn owns some of the greatest Clovis points ever made. It was easy for Blackwell to study Fenn's collection surreptitiously: Fenn makes his material available for scientific scrutiny; his collections have been widely published; and casts of many of his points are in general circulation. The centerpiece of Fenn's collection is a cache of Clovis points—the Fenn Cache—from the area where Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming meet. In this cache is a singular point made of an extremely rare and beautiful material called phosphoria, which is found in the Bighorn Mountains, in Wyoming. This spear point displays possibly the finest diagonal *outré passé* flaking in existence. Blackwell acquired a cast of this point and studied it intensively. One of the points that Blackwell sold to Fenn was made of phosphoria, which he had found after an intensive search in a riverbed below the Bighorns. He had flaked it using the same *outré passé* diagonal technique. The Fenn Cache contains three quartz-crystal points, and Blackwell also duplicated these with his crystal fakes. By giving the dozen points a Drake "look," it appears, he may have been tempting Fenn further: only thirteen points had come from the Drake Cache, and many believe that there are more to discover.

Blackwell courted other buyers. According to a major collector, Mark Mullins, Blackwell often cornered collectors and dealers at arrowhead shows around the country and casually questioned them about their taste in points. What stone did they prefer? What localities and types did they like best? He delivered to them what they most wanted, and then further romanced his victims with elaborate stories about how and where the points had been found.

"Stories sell points," Blackwell told me. "The more outlandish the story, the more desirable the point." Blackwell made up a story about the Alberta points he had sold to Mark Mullins. It involved a Canadian paratrooper, named Oscar, who had just returned home from the Second World War. To back up the story, Blackwell supplied a letter that Oscar had supposedly written when he sold Blackwell the points. "I came home from W.W. II in April 1946," the letter stated. "Went hunting that fall in the Sandhill Country of Saskatchewan." As he was wandering in the back country, Oscar wrote, he came across a litter of old chalky bones mingled with "arrowheads." He picked up eight whole ones. "When I got home, I wrapped the arrowheads in a *Life* magazine. Still remember how mad my mother got cause she hadn't read it yet." The points that Mullins received were duly wrapped up in pages torn from a 1946 issue of *Life*. Blackwell told me he hadn't been "gunning" for Fenn, Mullins, or anyone else. "I wanted them to feel like they were getting their money's worth," he said. Nevertheless, he told me, he soon began to feel deeply troubled about forging the points. "What I wanted very badly was to provide a better life for my family. I did a desperate thing in a desperate situation. I didn't like it when I did it, and I like it even less now." He paused, and then added, "There are nights when I wish I'd never found that first point when I was seven years old."

Later, Blackwell described his agony to me: "I'm a law-and-order kind of guy," he said. As a military officer, he had always placed a high value on being what he called



TEACHERESE	ENGLISH
Marches to a different drummer.	Nuts.
Needs to brush up on his people skills.	Homicidal.
Creative.	None too bright.
Very creative.	A moron, actually.
She's a riot!	I can't stand her.
He's doing just fine.	What's your kid's name again?

"an honorable man." Now he could no longer call himself that, and, he said, "It makes me feel small." At one point, while he was watching the Presidential-impeachment hearings, he said, a terrible thought struck him: "I'm no better than Bill Clinton!"

BROOKSIDE CEMETERY
SMOKING
NON-SMOKING
KOREN

• •

As soon as Forrest Fenn heard Kenneth Tankersley's unpleasant news about the authenticity of his new points, he recalled that it was Woody Blackwell who had told him about the antique dealer in Montana with the Clovis points for sale. When he discovered that his fellow-collector and friend Mark Mullins had bought some Alberta points from Blackwell that had the same Teflon-like coating on them, it confirmed his suspicions. Jeb Taylor had also bought his points from Blackwell.

"I called Blackwell up," Fenn said. "I told him, 'These points are travelling a lot of roads and they all lead back to you.' "

Blackwell, for his part, remembers it differently: after a concerned call from Mark Mullins, he called Fenn on his own initiative, he says, to confess, and told him, "Mr. Fenn, the points you've got are not authentic, and I know that because I made the things." Blackwell says that he was unaware of the furor going on about his fake points and did not know that he was on the verge of being exposed. Taylor has his doubts. "I said to Woody, 'Well, if it was conscience that made you confess, it was pretty good timing, because you were a week away from being nailed.' "

Whether out of conscience or in a panic about getting caught, Blackwell acted quickly. He picked up the telephone, and over the course of a humiliating week he called everyone who had been affected by what he had done. He called the authenticators and described exactly how he had made the points. He called collectors and friends to apologize. He wrote frank letters of acknowledgment to all those he had dealt with. He FedExed everyone's money back—a move that was very painful for him financially.

Some collectors didn't want to believe him. When he told Jeb Taylor that he himself had made the points, Taylor started to protest. "My reaction was 'Not the Alberta!' " Taylor recalls. "I was about to contest him, really. I just felt so *sure* about that point." Taylor stopped when he realized how ridiculous it was for him to argue against the faker himself.

Despite the interstate nature of Blackwell's questionable financial transactions, nobody reported him to the F.B.I. Since everyone had got his money back, no one, apparently, felt inclined to pursue a prosecution.

"I wasn't hurt," said Fenn, "and I felt all along that his motivation wasn't money."

"I was really pissed about it," said Taylor, "but at the same time I respected his ability. I actually congratulated him."

How was Blackwell able to achieve something that so many experts had said was impossible? And why had he sold the points directly to the country's premier collectors and experts, instead of seeking out rubes and suckers in the hinterlands? "He could have made penny-ante thousand-dollar points," said Mullins, "and sold them to many people who wouldn't have gone to the trouble to get them authenticated, circulated, and examined."

The other day, I dropped by Fenn's house to take another look at the fake points. He brought them out, half a dozen in each fist, clinked them down on the bare kitchen table, and spread them carelessly around: no more caresses and black velvet. He picked out the remarkable quartz-crystal point and held it up to the New Mexico sunlight streaming through the window. He waggled it, strafing the room with flecks of light. "Everyone said it couldn't be done," he said, with a grin. "I think his motivation was to show these experts that he *could* do it. And he did."

When Woody Blackwell first began trying to reverse-engineer the Clovis point, he had a dream. It was, he says, the most remarkable dream of his life. It was night, and he was walking through some brush. Up ahead, he could see a group of men sitting in a circle around a campfire. They were wearing cloaks or skins. They were passing things around the fire, from hand to hand, admiring them. When he got close, he could see that the things were big, beautiful Clovis points. A man held one up to the firelight. Blackwell recognized it as a huge point from a cache discovered in East Wenatchee, Washington. The light from the fire was shining through it, setting it aglow. He tried to take a step closer to see better, and made a noise. The man turned and smiled at him. "I'm not a mystic," Blackwell says. "I'm not a religious man, and I'm not one of those puddingheaded New Agers out of Sedona. But, all the same, every Clovis point I've ever made, I wonder if *this* will be the price of admission, the ticket to let me go back and sit with those guys." ♦

FICTION

COSTUME DRAMA

BY HELEN SIMPSON

“WHAT have you told them at work?” she asked.

“What have you told them at yours?” I countered.

“I don’t need to tell them anything,” she said, looking down her long nose at me unsmilingly. “I’m in charge.”

We had met as arranged on the pavement outside the Huguenot house in Fournier Street, the one whose railings are headed with thistles rather than spears. I had been out east to Canary Wharf that morning to see a man at the Regulators about some recent embarrassing losses suffered by Leviathan Bank, whose compliance department I was running. On the way back to my lunchtime assignation in Spitalfields, I had had the bad luck to be driven by one of those furious obsessive cabbies who hate traffic and know a thousand secrets about London’s backstreets. He scorned the obvious routes, refused Commercial Road, shot off up in the direction of Bow, then lost his temper at the first red light and tore off round Salmon Lane to grind to a swearing, cursing, and, of course, entirely foreseeable halt on the Mile End Road. I was feeling mildly sick by this point, but he would not be satisfied until he had swung us madly north up into Bethnal Green. At Weavers Fields I began to despair of ever escaping, but then at last he dropped me at the top of Brick Lane.

MARK BORTHWICK

Even so, I was early. I felt buoyant and restless, looking forward to the next hour or so. While I waited for Isobel Marley, I watched an old man running for a bus that had overshot the stop. He was creeping along, legs low down like a jaguar stealthily approaching its prey through the rain forest, with a broad ingratiating grin of pain on his face. I’m not really young anymore, it came to me, wincing in sympathy; but then (cheering up) I’m not all that old yet, either.

Isobel’s black cab drew up. She took her time unpacking her long-limbed full-bellied self from the back and then made the driver write out a receipt. We exchanged nods, avoiding each other’s eyes.

“So,” she said. “Where is this secret cavern of temptation?”

“I’m not allowed to say,” I said, truthfully. “You’ll just have to follow me.”

“That’s ridiculous!” she hissed as I led her down past Fashion Street and the police station, then left into Chicksand Street. “Who do they think they are?”

I HAD met Isobel Marley two days before, at Iddon Featherstone’s reception for its corporate-finance clients, in Seething Lane. Iddon Featherstone is a smallish law firm and the partners are always hoping I’ll put work its way. Sometimes I do. I went along this time because I’m curious about the firm’s mooted merger with Marbeiter Rotenhart, which is looking both inevitable and, for some Iddon Featherstone partners, disastrous.

I found myself in a conversation with Keith Mannion, the head of corporate finance. “The trouble is, Laura, we need more than a toehold in Frankfurt,” he fretted. “We may not like it, but we’ve got to bite the bullet.”

“Difficult,” I commiserated, taking a

sip of mineral water. I glanced round the room. Everyone there was in the self-concealing monochrome of corporate life. The only flashes of color were provided by the men's ties.

Not far from us, a very tall, strong-featured woman stood talking to Iddon Featherstone's managing partner, Graham Groton. She must have been six or seven months pregnant, and I couldn't help thinking how much better pregnancy looks in tailored worsted than in the more traditional maternity smocks.

"Of course, it's the way the whole world's having to go now," I said. "There's been a positive stampede of mergers in the broking sector."

We both watched as a waiter approached and the tall woman held out her glass for more champagne.

"That's illegal now, isn't it?" Keith Mannion said. "Boozing while up the duff? You'd get lynched in the States for less than that."

"Good luck to her," I said.

"It'll be her fourth," said Keith Mannion, and for a moment I thought he was referring to her alcohol intake. "Isobel Marley, Q.C. She's done a great job for us on that money-laundering case in the Philippines."

"Oh yes." I frowned, recognizing the name from an article about women in that week's *Financial Times*. "In the updraught."

We watched Graham Groton raise his glass to her. He is rather short, Graham, and she was having to talk down to him.

"I only like tall men," I said flippantly. "I like to look up at a man."

" 'To,' " said Keith Mannion, with a startled roll of the eye. I realized he was several inches taller than me.

"No, 'at,' " I said, and smiled.

"Ah," he said. "Got you. But let me introduce you to Isobel. You must meet her."

Isobel Marley had been listening for long enough to Graham Groton's gung-ho line on the merger and on how we were all part of one big European family now for her face to register a flash almost of joy as we approached. Only almost, for her face was singularly serious, impressively so, and, except for the odd luxury of a frown, impassive.

"But how *can* Europe be one big happy family," I launched in, unable to let this go. It was Europe's various madly conflicting regulatory regimes that had kept me on fifteen-hour days these last two months. The man I had met earlier that year and whom I might, given the time, have grown to love had understandably grown tired of waiting until ten or eleven at night for my work-weary self to grace him with an hour or two, and had gone.

"Not exactly bad news for law firms," said Isobel, but her heart wasn't in it. She had been distracted; she had noticed what no man would ever notice.

At this point, Keith Mannion and Graham Groton were drawn away by another Iddon Featherstone partner. Isobel paused, then allowed herself to comment, "That's a nice shirt."

I was wearing a white shirt with my gray suit, boringly meek and plain. Only a member of the unofficial ocular freemasonry would have noticed that it was made of nun's veiling, with a faint gray stripe the width of a pencil lead.

"Why," I remembered asking the sales assistant at Wurstigkeit that time, staring hard at the beautiful but after all plain shirt, "why, um, is it *so* much money, this one?"

"Ah, this one," he had replied. "Look, there, the stripe, you see? It is because the line is broken."

Sure enough, there were minute sugar-grain-size gaps in the fine stripe.

"Of course," I'd said. And bought it.

I now saw Isobel struggling with herself. She was intensely competitive, that much was obvious, and she would not be able to bear not to ask.

"It's nice cloth," I taunted, almost laughing. "Like down against the skin. And, see, the line is broken." I held out my cuff for inspection.

"So it is," she said. "Yes."

She paused again, poker-faced, then could not help herself and asked, "It's not from that shop, is it? That mad shop with the password where they won't give out their address? What's it called?"

"Wurstigkeit," I said, blushing slightly.

"What a ludicrous idea, a shop with a password," she scoffed.

"It's eccentric," I agreed, blithely.

"Isn't it terribly expensive?" she sniffed.

"Not to someone in the updraught," I said. "Surely."

It was far too expensive for me now, but I wasn't going to tell *her* that. Since I first visited, Wurstigkeit's prices had quintupled, sextupled, rising by at least a hundred per cent each year. Market forces!

Five years ago I had met a man from Shibui Investments for lunch in a restaurant near Liverpool Street. He had been summoned by his cell phone to an emergency deal-breaker before we had finished the *amuse-gueules,* and so, finding myself with a rare uncharted hour, I had allowed myself guiltily to drift outside, mapless, into the dusty sun. It was at a point in my life when I could not sleep for worrying. I was starting to experience low-level panic attacks, when I could hear my jumpy heart and ragged breathing while myriad horrors, regrets, fears, and raw-heads hurtled toward me (lying doggo beside my now ex-husband, pretending to sleep) in a shower of meteorites. I had taken to carrying in my briefcase a collection of small bottles of flower-dew remedies, each claiming to protect against a specific misery. The ones I used most were Rock Water, labelled "For the self-repressed who overwork and deny themselves any relaxation," and Wood Betony, "For those who find it difficult to love themselves."

Anyway, it was during this window-like hour at a less than euphoric stage in my life that, by chance, I stumbled into Wurstigkeit, which had opened only that week. It was like stepping into the fabled wardrobe and finding yourself in another country.

"Wurstigkeit," Isobel said. "I wonder what that means. Sausage something, it sounds like."

"Laura," said Keith Mannion, waltzing up with an older man in tow. "Laura, I'd like you to meet Günter Mangelkammer, who's over from Frankfurt."

"How fortunate," Isobel said, smiling at Herr Mangelkammer. "We were just puzzling over the meaning of a German word. Perhaps you will be able to help us."

"I might be delighted," said Herr Mangelkammer warily.

"The word was 'Wurstigkeit,' " I said.

"Ah yes," said Herr Mangelkammer, visibly relieved. "I know this. It is an expression introduced by Bismarck. It describes a mental state. How must I say? To do with sausages."

"Sausages?" said Keith Mannion, his eyebrows in his hair.

"A state of sausage-like behavior," persisted Herr Mangelkammer.

"'Sausageness,'" I put forward.

"'Sausageness' is good," he agreed. "Meaning, people don't care. They don't care a sausage's worth."

"They don't give a fig?" I offered.

"They don't give a fuck!" cried Keith Mannion, laughing heartily. "They don't give a flying fuck!"

"Your way is better, I think," said Herr Mangelkammer, honoring me with a nod.

WE turned from Chicksand Street into Frostric Walk, then down a villainous urinous alley so narrow that where a moment before there had been enough blue sky above to cut out a pair of sailor's trousers now there was nothing but a forget-me-not ribbon.

"Are you *quite* sure you know where we're going?" asked Isobel with some asperity as she picked her well-shod way between various noisome puddles.

We took a twist at the end, then on to one last dark, paved lane, and we had arrived.

"You must be joking," said Isobel flatly, staring at the scuffed and numberless portal with the blacked-out picture window beside it.

She glanced at her watch with irritation, then at me.

"Wait a moment," I said.

On the wall at the level where a doorbell should have been was the bas-relief head of a satyr, and into the ancient whorled ear of this creature I whispered the password. Then I stepped back and waited.

The door opened slowly on backward hinges, and we followed. Inside, it was the hall of the Mountain King filled with the trousseau of his robber bride. I caught my breath, and started to feel bouncy and oxygenated, airy and greedy. My eyes lusted around all over the place. The colors teased and tingled and clashed like music, while the walls receded into velvety darkness and the glass-festooned ceiling glowed. I tried to maintain some semblance of indifference, but the smiles kept crossing my lips, and soon I was cooing and clucking and gasping as I moved from rail to rail. Isobel riffled through this rack and that, pursing her lips. I saw the stuff through her eyes, as when I'd looked in for the first time five years ago. I'd thought then, What a load of tat. What a heap of magpie rubbish, little bright bits of rubbish.

Then I'd suddenly got caught. Was it a corsair's slanted stripes down the front of a structured cardigan? I'd thought, How *can* they charge more than a fiver for this nonsense? And then, a second later, the scales had fallen from my eyes. I'd understood that here was something indefensible at work, and had reached for my checkbook.

Now Isobel was reaching for the price tags and huffing and puffing and casting stuff aside with a curled lip.

"Don't look at the price tags," I advised. "Look at the clothes."

I took a long viridian garment from its hanger and held it out behind her. Instinctively she slid her arms back into the sleeves and shrugged it on. We looked at her guarded face in the long mirror, and at the grande-dame opera coat whose plaited, puffy, serpentine collar she had drawn up to her chin.

"No," she said, casting it aside. "I'd never wear it. *When* would I wear it?"

"That's not the point," I started to say, but decided to wait.

Perhaps after all she was merely status seeking, an acquisitive label-conscious shopper. If so, I had misjudged, and this was a waste of time.

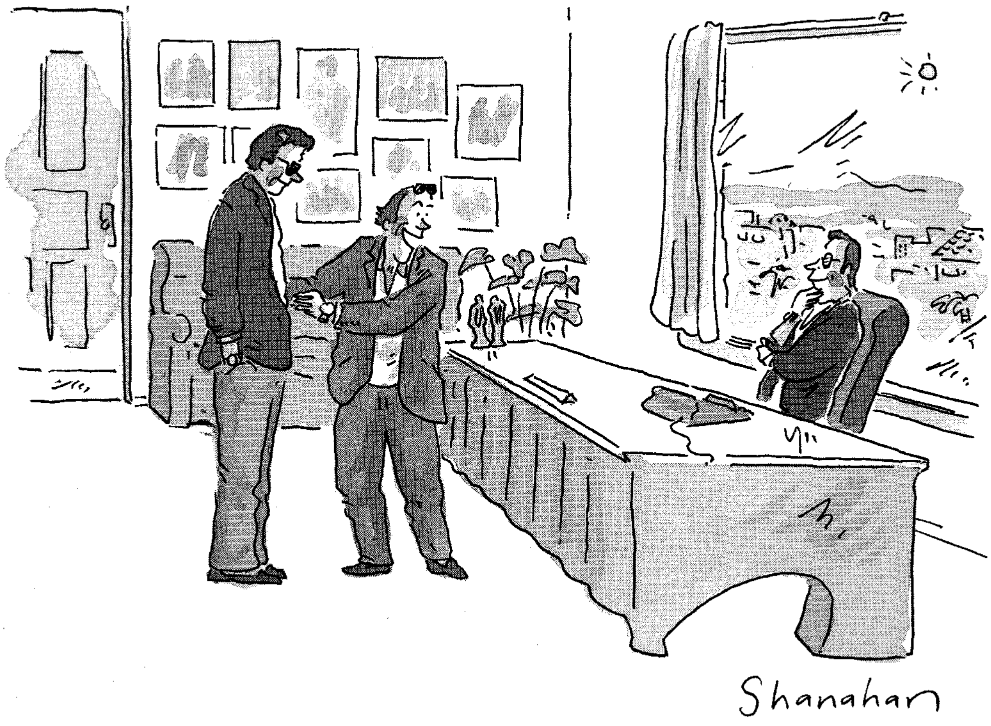
I remembered that *Financial Times* interview with her. A blur of phrases came back at me, things like "a hundred and twenty per cent," "superleague," "total commitment," that sort of stuff. She had been quoted as saying, "I'm a workaholic, I'm fantastically good at what I do," and had rejected the soubriquet of fat cat with talk of freedom and markets. That was all distinctly unpromising. Surely she had no time for anything else.

On the other hand, she had been the one to fall in love with a shirt, I reminded myself; so she must have *something*.

"There is nothing here that I could wear to work," she said. "There is nothing here that I could wear at home. Family life. What's the point?"

"But it's *you*, that coat. You can see that," I declared. "Apotheosis clothes, that's what this place is for."

Then Isobel caved in. Her de-



"He killed in rehab."

fenses crumbled, reason fled. She stopped looking at the little tickets and their prices. Instead she narrowed her eyes and started to hunt down the most fantastical, the most artfully bizarre. I knew I hadn't been mistaken. I knew she had an eye. We were two of a kind when it came to this. She'd caught on. She was caught in. From now on she was a driven woman.

SOON we had amassed enough between us to start trying on. In a little side bathroom off the showroom—Wurstigkeit had nothing as utilitarian as a changing room—with silks and velvets over the rusted old washbasin, elbows in each other's faces, we struggled into mad dresses, lunatic ensembles. I barely knew this woman, I'd met her only once before, yet here we were taking off our clothes together in a rusty cubicle.

I tried on a cotton shirt first, raspberry colored and almost raspberry scented as I pulled it over my head. I could smell the cleanness of the cotton, and the pleasant smell of our sweat, recent, slight, and grassy, then wafting stronger from under our arms. Touching the cotton to my cheek, I found it as fine as a baby's skin, and sighed.

She's much taller than me, Isobel, and my eyes were level with the great mamelonated nipples of pregnancy spread out by the gauze of her bra. I looked away. I hoped she wouldn't appraise what she saw of me with that merciless female regard which is so chilling. You must have seen the way women look at each other in dressing rooms or at the gym—furtive, assessing, without lust or kindness, hypercritically alert to any sign of age or deterioration. No wonder there is so little nakedness in British life. We live under a cloud inside our clothes, as blue-veined as cheese, as bluish-white as milk.

"I would love to hold a baby again," I said, thinking back to that good dense beanbag weight.

"For half an hour," she said shortly, struggling inside a hiss of silk. "I'm not that keen on babies per se." Her head surfaced above the glinting tussah and she scowled. She really did look impressive when she scowled, her features baroque and curly round the long straight nose.

"All those vile health visitors in hospital moralizing about breast-feeding," she shuddered. "Christ! Just let me get back to work. Maternity leave be buggered."

It was on the tip of my tongue to mention antibodies, just for fun, but I thought she might punch me in the face.

When I had my daughter, I expressed my milk at home and at work; the freezer hoarded those precious cubes for the nanny to defrost; I carried the agonizing breast pump round in my handbag as reverently as if it were a holy relic. The milk I managed to collect in the ladies' at work I stored at the back of the office fridge in a clearly marked bottle until I could take it home. I stopped all that rather abruptly when my secretary one day came and whispered to me that there was a rumor that the boys in sales were adding vodka. To the milk. Which is the sort of thing that seems mere infantile fun before you have a baby but cruelty itself afterward. I could see I might have seemed too earnest to them. They simply couldn't begin to imagine.

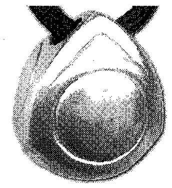
"Have you got a good nanny?" I asked as I pulled on a stretchy velvet skirt like pliable moss.

"I loathe her with a passion," she said, her voice muffled as she drew the dress back up. "So do the children. But she's excellent, she runs the whole domestic show, I couldn't do without her. Anyway, it's good for them to realize that life isn't just about what *they* want all the time. It's not a picnic."

Whenever I ache for another baby, I think about the whole nanny business and think again. One child was fine. I mean, it was too much for my husband. In the year after she was born, he said he was wilting, he no longer felt free. Then in the second year he said, "I don't feel I can grow unless I leave," and, dashing a manly tear from his eye, he left. I've kept the same nanny, Marion, for whom it is an ideal job. Nannies tend to jump ship at new babies, but I didn't rock the boat and now she's like my wife.

I looked at the glamorous velvet against my thighs, its pile as close as sheep-nibbled grass, soaking up light and sound.

"Wouldn't it be nice to be covered



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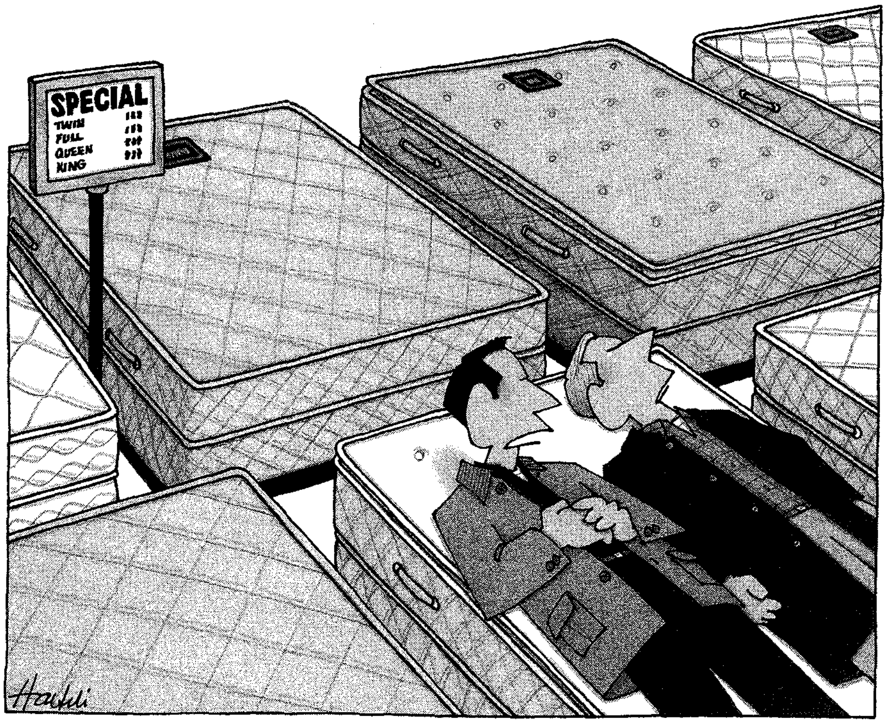

"I still say we should get a queen-size mattress—despite the obvious jokes it will invite among the sales staff."

• •

with this all over," I said dreamily. "Like a cat."

"What," she said, frowning. "A catsuit?"

"What's a catsuit?"

For an instant I saw a cat unzip its fur and step out naked into the sun. I caught my eye in the mirror above the basin. Some days I look at my face, I might be a bit tired, and find myself thinking, That could do with a press with a damp cloth. Time marches on. Recently a graininess like slub silk has appeared in the valley between my breasts, where a few months ago all was perfectly smooth and unmarked. It's more obvious after sleep, and rather fascinating to see age approaching in leaps and bounds. The man for whom I had not been able to spare the time was suddenly upon me, an excellent weight, for those few ideal moments when my knees had been drawn up into the made-to-measure hollows of his armpits.

"It's hot in here," I said, and heaved another sigh.

In that cramped washroom space, trying not to catch each other's elbows or noses as we pulled garments over our heads, tugged others along our thighs, eyes averted, up in the air, I caught glimpses of Isobel's baby-packed belly and of her extra-long limbs, more bone and health than is usually a woman's share, and wondered for a moment how she and her husband had sex together. Did she go up and catch him by the lapel like a judo wrestler? Did he rugby-tackle her from behind and bring her down like that? Or did she collapse elegantly onto a chaise longue, a giraffe, a folding ruler, gradually succumbing? Perhaps there was no surrender; possibly she was proactive in her rapprochement with her husband, chucking him under the chin, bear-hugging him, exchanging sportive punches. Hard to imagine how a very tall, strong woman comports herself here. Shrinking and passivity would look ridiculous, like a mountain trying to be a mouse. You'd have to live up to your stature, be splendid, remote, brave, ungirlish. To be big and tall and spiritless would be worse than being little and short and spiritless; somehow more of a waste, like an uninhabited tenement building. I reflected on the spite tall women endure, as though they were not entitled to that extra length of bone, as though there were something risible about it, and, frequently, their woundedness in the face of this—the huddled quality that makes them the diametrical opposite of so many short men who go round causing trouble, demanding more space and attention than they were born with. Than their mothers could give them.

In any case, there was nothing passive or spiritless about Isobel. She was full of power. Back in the shop, when we went to stand in front of the long mirror, a sweet-faced young salesgirl had attached herself to her splendor, eying her with the shrewdness of a lover, pulling out this, then this, then that for her to try. Despite herself, Isobel was impressed.

"That on you," I said excitedly of the strange item the girl had persuaded Isobel to try, pelisse-like but sleeved, pink and fawn and as minutely pleated as the gills on the underside of a field mushroom. "That's so clever, like Mme. de Sévigné meets Simone de Beauvoir."

"Hmm," she said, staring hard at herself in the mirror.

"I think it's right for you," murmured the salesgirl.

She was some fifteen years younger than either of us, a few inches of golden stomach open to the air, her navel pierced with a diamond-tipped silver ring. Isobel and I are both in our mid-thirties, the age of heroes in Russian novels, halfway through the three score years and ten.

"Try this," said the girl to Isobel, holding against her a dress the color of a cricket pitch before a thunderstorm.

"Yes," said Isobel slowly, nodding.

The girl dropped an acid-yellow mantilla over her left shoulder and we let out our collective breath with a hiss. She smiled in triumph.

After that, Isobel was in the buying vein. Straight on to the yes pile went a jacket the good honest color of carrots and their paler core; a gray linen suit with the mauveness of dry earth; a blue-and-white dress like a willow-patterned teacup.

I cannot imagine what color has to do with emotion, but the two are certainly inextricable. When I call my daughter to mind, I see her pale hot eyes, a furious light blue, fair-fringed, and the coral-freckled pink pallor of her father's thin skin. My best friend appears, and her celadon eyes are full of understanding without hardness, translucent, like sage backlit or the color of chives but lighter, their color and light remarkable, as if reflected off a silver plate.

When I think of women I know, I always see their eyes; with men, I see their mouths, their hands, the shape of their heads. I've tried to imagine why this is, and can conclude only that it's because women and men still do not fully meet each other's gaze.

Isobel's cell phone sang out in muffled urgency from her bag. It was buried beneath a heap of bias-cut frangipani-petalled skirts and pin-striped peignoirs, pink plush toreador pants and a richly ribboned pea jacket.

It rang and rang.

She looked at the heap of clothes as though it cradled a howling baby. She scowled, and the frown line between her brows was like a fault line running clean through her.

"It might be important," she said.

I shrugged.

It stopped after a while.

BOTH of us ought to have been somewhere else. Both of us had too much to do. Her time is so precious that it is charged out to other people at a pound a minute. Five pounds a minute. Ten!

I never have enough time. I work an eleven-hour day, excluding commuting. That means my nanny has to work a thirteen-hour day. I have to be out before seven in the mornings, and if I'm lucky I'm back to kiss my daughter good night.

"Do you feel guilty?" I asked Isobel.

"What about?" she said.

"Work," I mumbled. "The children."

"Why should I?" she said. "If you don't want to be financially dependent on your partner, then you have to work. That's obvious."

How strange, I thought; that sounds just like the sort of thing you say *before* you have children. After all the what my ex-husband would term "personal growth" I've been through in recent years, nothing is obvious to me anymore.

"Anyway, guilt is not a useful emotion," she continued. "Try this."

And so I tried on a long peculiar dress, as yellow as a pear, with mulberry-

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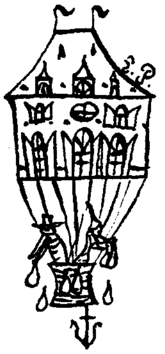
stained panels from armpit to hem, and a sash that tied over the stomach, making a present of the wearer like the bow on a box of chocolates. It was a wild figment. It was unhinged. And yet I stood between big Isobel and the little sales girl and we all smiled at the mirror, even Isobel, that expert shopping smile. The dress was made for me.

The salesgirl held up her fingertips in some cabalistic Continental sign indicating perfection. I don't look at my reflection much these days, but now I was doing so and felt rather shy, like laughing, as though seeing a once close friend after a long time. Isobel said, "That's you. It's got that look you have. Don't mind me saying so."

She was a little embarrassed. After all, we didn't know each other from Adam. These were intimate exchanges. And yet we probably saw the point of each other, the visual point, more than our husbands, or ex-husbands, did.

Do you know that old euphemism "a bit of the other"? To me it suggests a different world just on the edge of our own, a middle earth, free of the usual cares and weights. Well, this dress was a bit of the other, it was what you might wear to a middle-earth party. I felt aerated and energized, the very opposite of the creeping dismay that descends when you buy and immediately know you should not have bought, so that the new garment dogs you grimly, haunts you miserably, flaps at you from the touchline of your dreams.



As for Isobel, she had accumulated a heap of finery and was now standing frowning by the till while they totted up how much it would cost. She looked like a baffled monarch, unable to believe that she was preparing to hand over vast sums to these illusionists.

"I think these things are right for you," said the salesgirl consolingly. She smiled and nodded her head.

We were now in the hands of two assiduous bustling boys. One was removing the price tags and the other was folding and wrapping.

"This *gilet*, it does not have a ticket," said the first boy. " 'Ow much is it?"

The second boy raised a quizzical eyebrow.

"Two hundred fifty? Three hundred, I think."

He shrugged, and held it in the air, hallooing to a colleague across the way.

" 'Ow much is this, Gianni?"

"Four hundred."

"Four hundred," he repeated, turning back, unblinking.

"Four hundred fifty," called someone from another corner of the shop.

Figures ricocheted in the air, as at an auction.

"No, four hundred," came the final estimate from a woman at the till, chimed out as though announcing a bargain.

Isobel moved her head from side to side as though she had been swimming and was trying to shake the water from her ears.

After such an exchange in Wurstigkeit, everything is so unreal that payment becomes something oddly casual and insouciant. You are anesthetized against the usual anxiety at handing over money. It is pure thaumaturgy. I remembered my own first visit here, when I had asked the price of something, and politely scoffed at the answer and walked out. Then I'd walked around the narrow streets thinking about the silly little garment in question, and it was just like coming down with flu. Actual feverishness had joined forces with a sense of suddenly lowered resistance and I had gone back in and handed over my money.

"You've got to hand it to them," I quipped.

Isobel gave a wan smile.

"You would spend the same on a picture," commented the woman at the till. "Is the same thing."

"Is not the same thing," hissed Isobel to me.

"Have them both," I said, as she havered between two shirts, one pale pink and the other bright Saxe blue.

"You've got to make choices, Laura," she said sternly. "You can't have everything."

"Why not?" I inquired. "Here at least."

I wandered off while she paid. When I returned she sat sprawled on a chair, flushed and exhausted and leaden-eyed.

Our salesgirl approached with a little tray holding a crystal noggin of eau-de-vie and a few frail sugar biscuits. These Isobel wolfed down.

Then she said crossly, "What are they *for*?"

We turned and watched as a pair of cowry-trimmed chaparajos was wrapped in tissue paper.

"They are smart but casual," pronounced the beautiful boy who was wrapping them.

"Yeah yeah," Isobel said rudely. She was back in her work clothes, and the spell was wearing off. She glanced at her watch and clicked her tongue impatiently.

"You can wear them anywhere," he insisted, looking up from under raven's-wing brows.

"Like where?" snapped Isobel.

He shrugged superbly.

"You can do the gardening in them," he said.

"Oh yes, of *course*," said Isobel. "The gardening!"

And at last she capitulated. She was positively wreathed in smiles. I barely recognized her. Amusement played on her face and made it appear like floating quicksilver. She was transmogrified; she had literally lightened up.

I glanced at my watch. Good grief, was that the time? It was.

Things started to move fast. The crackling carrier bags were handed across like hot cakes, and we were out in the real world again, turfed out onto the pavement with the numberless door closed firmly behind us.

"Where are you going next?" she asked.

"Eastcheap."

"We can share a cab," she said. "Do you know, I've got eight hundred pages to read before four o'clock."

We were walking fast toward the main road, almost skipping. Her strong face was alive with pleasure and sweetness, silvery and flickering with smiles like water in the sun.

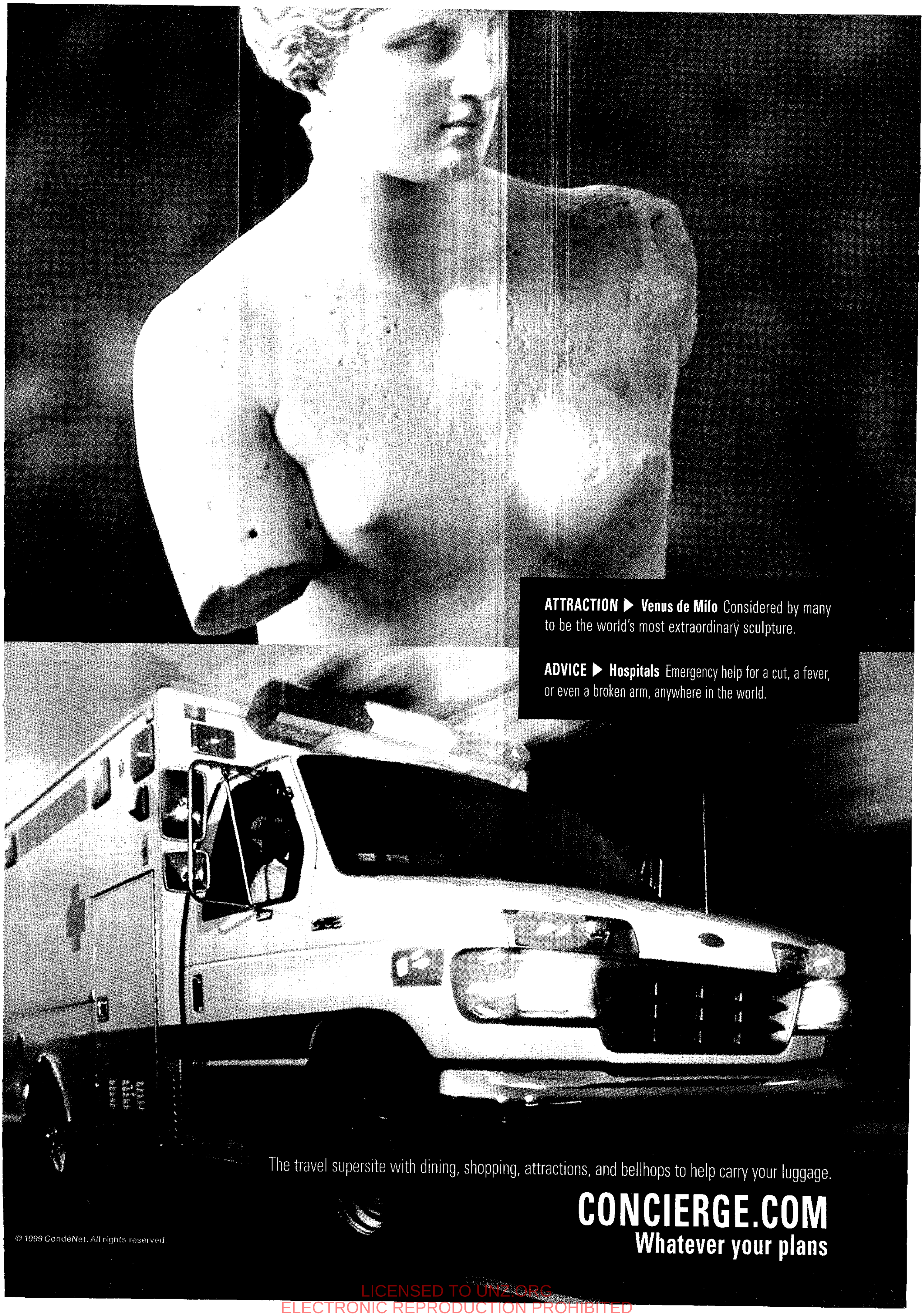
"And I've got to go and interview the head of sales." I laughed. "Guilty as hell. Out on his ear!"

"That reminds me," she said, slowing down for a moment. "Now I've paid, I want the password."

"Fair enough," I said.

We stopped, she stooped down, and I stood on tiptoe to whisper it into her ear.

She laughed aloud. ♦



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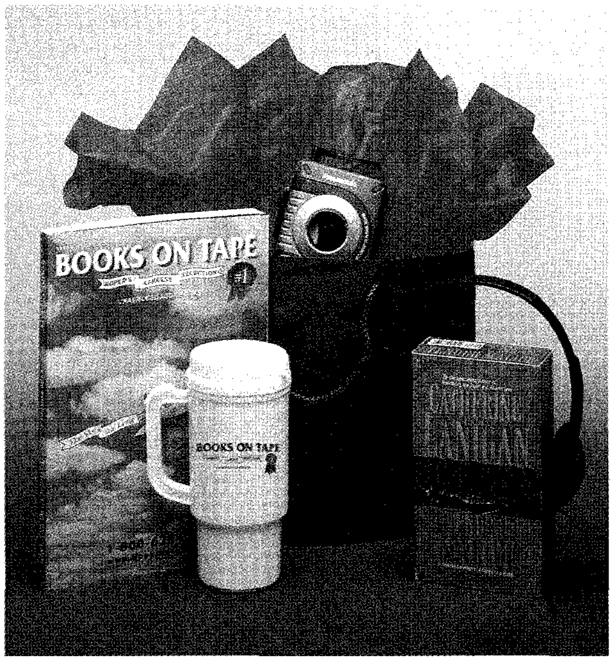
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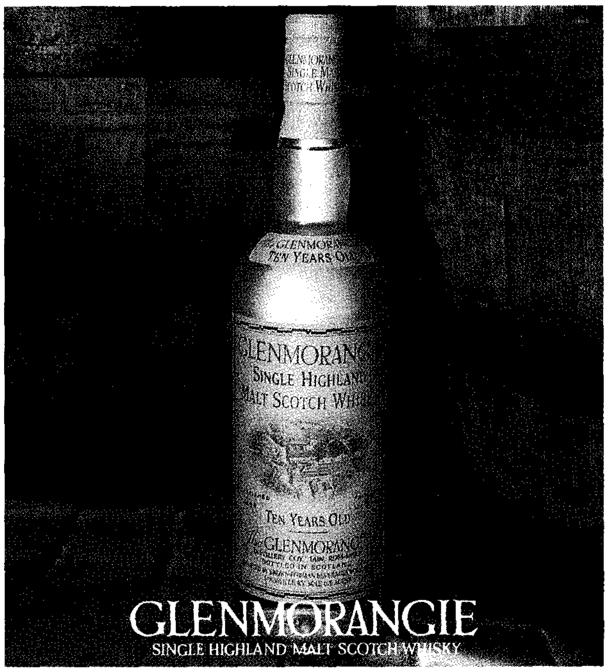

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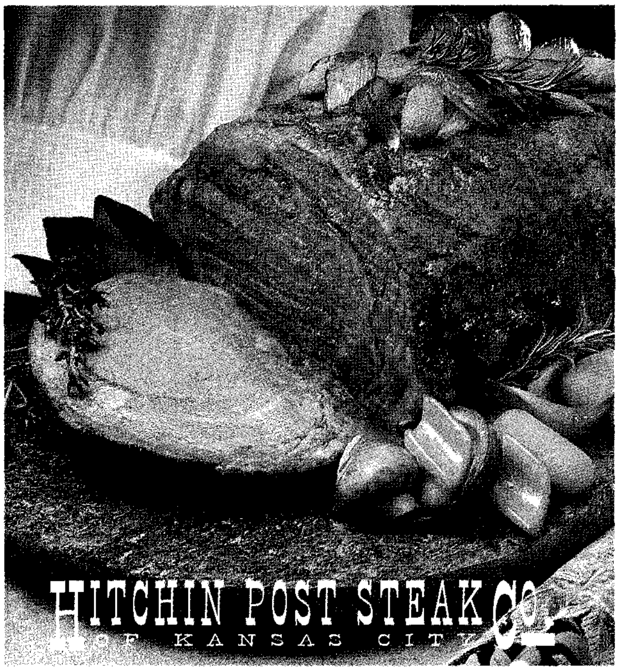

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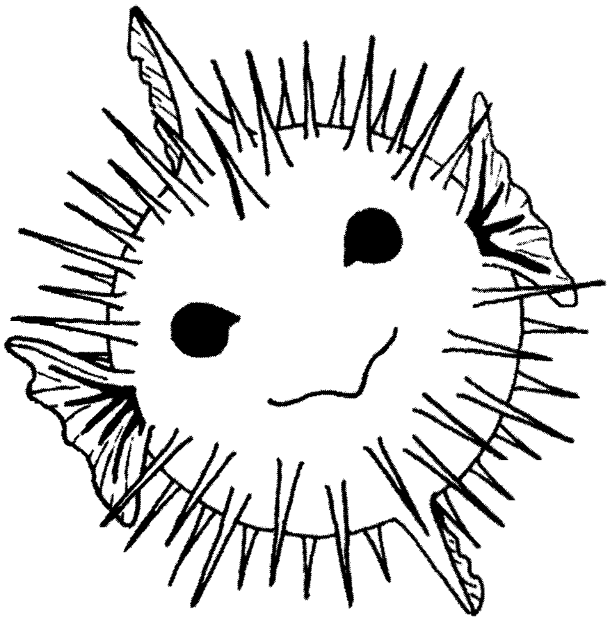

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

BURNED AGAIN

The woman at the stake is worthy of another five hundred years of obsession.

BY JOAN ACOCELLA

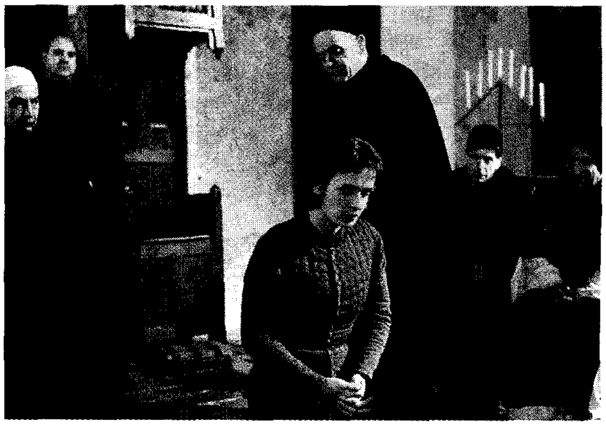
JOAN OF ARC movies, understandably, have always been low on sex, but in the newest entry, "The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc," by Luc Besson, the French action-movie director, that omission is addressed. Early in the film we have the following scene: Little Joan, maybe ten years old, comes out of church to find that her village is on fire. We are in the middle of the Hundred Years' War, and English soldiers are rampaging through Domrémy. Joan enters her house, and there she finds her older sister Catherine. (She has just told her confessor how much she loves this sister.) Catherine had been about to climb into a cupboard to hide from the English, but now she stuffs Joan in the cupboard instead, closes the door, and stands in front of it. In come three English goons. Two of them sit down to eat the family's dinner. The third—leering, filthy, appalling—approaches Catherine, pins her against the cupboard (we get a shot of her feet dangling above the floor), and impales her on his sword, which, now wet with her blood, pierces the cupboard as well, barely missing Joan. He then loudly copulates with Catherine's dead body—bang, bang, bang, against the cupboard—as Joan, together with the camera, watches his contorted face through cracks in the cupboard door. The two other soldiers, put off their feed, also watch. When the man finishes, he does up his fly and says to his mates, "Your turn." Thus begins the career of Besson's Joan of Arc. In past ages, Joan has been seen as a mystic, a saint, a national hero. Now, in keeping with the times, she is a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder.

JOAN, as she testified at her trial, was thirteen when she was first visited by voices from Heaven. It was summertime, around noon, in her father's garden. At first, it seems, the voices just told her to be a good girl and go to church, but eventually their instructions became more pointed. The Hundred Years' War was a dynastic conflict over whether the Plantagenets (English) or the Valois (French) were the rightful rulers of France. The English invaded France, and by the fourteen-twenties they had divided the country in half. Most of the lands below the Loire were held by the Valois, under Charles, the uncrowned, uncertain, unwarlike Dauphin. The lands above the Loire were controlled by the English, in alliance with the Burgundian dynasty. Joan's village was in the north, in Anglo-Burgundian territory. There is no evidence that she had an older sister Catherine, let alone that she witnessed the murder of such a sister, but she certainly saw her village suffer, as all of France suffered. (In the war's hundred years, the country's population was halved.) In 1428, the English laid siege to Orléans, on the border between north and south. If they took that city, they could cross the Loire and invade the rest of France. That was the situation which Joan's voices eventually addressed. They told this illiterate peasant girl, who had never been more than a few miles from her village, to go to Orléans, raise the siege, and then take the Dauphin to Rheims to be crowned King Charles VII of France. In other words, they told her to end the Hundred Years' War.

She did so. Or, by inspiriting the French soldiers at Orléans, she provided the turning point in the war. How Joan managed to get to Charles, and persuade him to arm her, and then convince the Valois captains that she should join the charge at Orléans is still something of a mystery, but at that point the French forces were so beaten down that they were almost willing to believe that a virgin had been sent by God to deliver them. And once Orléans was saved, under her banner, many of the French came to see her as an angel, an actual heavenly messenger. Meanwhile, the Anglo-Burgundians regarded her as a witch. (See Shakespeare's "Henry VI, Part 1," where she *is* a witch.) She was a subject of international debate, but not for long. Seventeen when she set out for Orléans, she was eighteen when the Burgundians finally captured her and sold her to the English for ten thousand pounds. The Church then put her through a four-month heresy trial—basically a fake trial. (Her chief examiners were firmly in league with the English, who demanded her death.) She was nineteen when she was taken out, barefoot, to the marketplace in Rouen and burned alive.

All that happened in the fifteenth century, and it gave Joan a privileged place in the high and low culture of Europe ever after. For years following her death, people claimed that she was still alive, that someone else had been burned in her place. (There were Joan sightings, like Elvis sightings. There were also Joan impersonators.) Paintings, plays, epic poems were devoted to her. But it was not until the nineteenth century that she really came into her own. As George Bernard Shaw pointed out in the preface to his play "Saint Joan," she was born before her time. She was, he said,

Milla Jovovich as Joan, photographed by Brigitte Lacombe. Bottom, left to right: Renée Falconetti in Carl Dreyer's "Passion of Joan of Arc," Geraldine Farrar in Cecil B. De Mille's epic, and Sandrine Bonnaire in Jacques Rivette's "Joan the Maid."



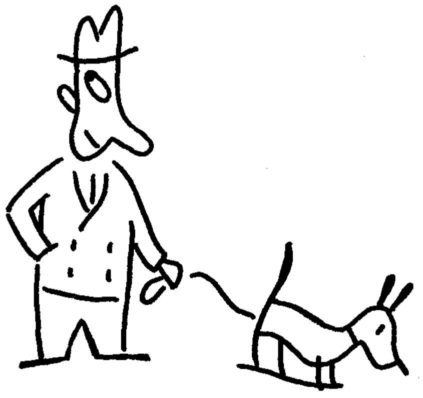
one of the first Protestant martyrs: it was her claim that she had a direct, unmediated connection with God—and that she, not the Church, would judge the truth of her voices—that got her condemned as a heretic. Furthermore, in her insistence that race and national boundaries overrode dynastic inheritance, she was one of Europe's first nationalists. (By medieval standards, the English monarchy's claim to France was arguably quite legitimate.)

But it wasn't just nationalist sentiment that endeared Joan to the nineteenth century. Her story had everything that century liked. First, medievalism, and medieval spirituality: the voice of God, arriving to a child in her father's potato fields. Second, primitivism: the fact that she was a child, and a peasant, and so, by nineteenth-century lights, morally superior to the educated, the mature, the ordained. Third, sentimentality: if, as Poe said, there was nothing more poetical than the death of a beautiful woman, then, as Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe proved, the death of a beautiful girl was even better.

Joan was thus designed by God for nineteenth-century artists, and they heard the call. Verdi and Tchaikovsky devoted operas to her; Gounod a music drama, in which Sarah Bernhardt later starred. The century also saw more than eighty new plays about Joan, the most influential being Schiller's 1801 "Maid of Orleans," fired with the revolutionary zeal of the period and, in the give-them-everything-they-want spirit of early Romanticism, adding a star-crossed love between Joan and an English soldier. There were novels, too—both Dumas *père* and Dumas *fils* had a go at the story—and essays and books by De Quincey, Lamartine, Jules Michelet, Anatole France. In his monumental "History of France," Michelet wrote, "Let us remember always, O Frenchmen, that our Fatherland was born in the heart of a woman, from her tenderness and her tears, from her blood which she shed for us." She was the mother of her country, the George Washington of France.

THE man who burned Joan's image into the modern mind, however, was not one of those famous writers but a scholar named Jules Quicherat. The proceedings of Joan's heresy trial, so sensitive politically, had been carefully recorded by court notaries. Likewise the proceedings of the so-called nullification trial, by which, after the testimony of more than a hundred witnesses, the Church revoked the verdict against her twenty-five years after her death. Most of these documents were sitting in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Quicherat called them up from the stacks, edited them, and published them in five volumes (1841-49), whereupon a great change came over the Joan legend. Before, she had been a heroine, an icon. Now she became a nineteen-year-old girl. The trial testimony tells us a huge amount about her: her childhood games, her love of fine clothes, how impressed she was by Charles's court. (There were more than fifty torches in the room, she reported.) As a result of Quicherat's work, we know more about this French farm girl than about any human being before her time, including—as we find out in Régine Pernoud and Marie Véronique Clin's book "Joan of Arc"—Plato, Caesar, and Christ. The transcripts also show her to have been an immensely appealing person. Sometimes, in reading the history books, one wonders how Joan got soldiers to follow her. She was, after all, a peasant, not to mention a girl. Furthermore, she did not allow her men to swear, to gamble, or to have women. Worse, she forbade pillage, which for many of her soldiers was the chief source of pay. But when you read the trial testimony you understand why these men wanted her as their captain. You would have, too, she was so wonderful—fiery, frank, and blithe. Here is an excerpt from a letter she sent to the English king as she prepared to take off for Orléans:

> I am the commander of the armies, and in whatever place I shall meet your French allies, I shall make them leave it, whether they wish to or not; and if they will not obey, I shall have them all killed. I am sent from God, the King of Heaven, to chase you all out of France.



She was the same way at the trial. Again and again, her judges tried to trip her up, lead her into heretical statements. Again and again, she answered them boldly, commonsensically, even wittily. As the transcripts prove, she did not embrace sainthood. Unlike Francis of Assisi, for example, she never engaged in soul-struck behavior—never ran naked or threw herself on thornbushes. When the old Duke Charles II, fallen ill, summoned her and asked whether he would recover, she told him she had no idea and then gave him a lecture on his personal conduct. (He had fathered five bastards.) Nor did she have any interest in becoming a martyr. The most poignant thing about the trial transcripts is how hard she tried to save herself—how, facing, with no help (she had no lawyer), thirty-odd theologians and legal scholars maybe twice her age, she fought, reasoned, and bargained—and how afraid she was of dying. At one point she tells the judges that her heavenly guides have promised to save her, but that she doesn't know whether they intend to do this on earth or in the afterlife—a distinction that is important to her:

> St. Catherine told me that I would have help; and I do not know if this will be deliverance from prison or deliverance when I face judgment. . . . My voices say, "Take everything serenely, do not shrink from your martyrdom; from that you will come finally to the kingdom of paradise." And my voices say that simply and absolutely, without fail. I call this a martyrdom because of the pain and hardship that I suffer in my imprisonment. I do not know if I will have to suffer worse.

She is thinking that maybe, by "martyrdom," the voices just mean imprisonment. This is the most painful moment in the trial.

Another thing that the transcripts revealed was that, like Galileo, Joan recanted. Worn down by the long trial, she finally signed a statement abjuring her mission from God and agreeing to change into women's clothes. (She had worn short hair and men's clothing throughout her military career.) Then, four days later, she withdrew her recantation. There are many competing explanations for her change of mind. I favor the one put forth by the Joan scholar Marina Warner: "She found she could not bear the nonsense that such a denial made of her past." Still, she does not seem to have fully understood what was in store. When, two days after her "relapse," they came to prepare her for burning, she wept and tore her hair. She died terrified, screaming to Jesus to help her.

FOR four centuries Joan was treated as a saint, but she was not a saint. After Quicherat, the movement for canonization began. In 1909, she was beatified; in 1920, she was canonized. And before and after, spurred by the transcripts, the canonization hearings, and wartime nationalism, there was an explosion of Joan art. Mark Twain wrote a book about her; Charles Péguy a series of passionate Christian Socialist poems. Arthur Honegger composed an oratorio, "Joan of Arc at the Stake," with a text by Paul Claudel. More new plays came out—seventeen in 1909, the year of her beatification, then twenty-nine more in the years between the two world wars—including, if we add post-Second World War offerings, dramas by Maeterlinck, Anouilh, and Maxwell Anderson, together with Shaw's famous play. Martha Graham made a Joan ballet. On Broadway in the forties and fifties, according to an old Manhattanite friend of mine, "You couldn't get Joan of Arc to shut up."

But in our century Joan's primary medium has been film. By the end of the First World War she had already been the subject of six movies, the most important of which was Cecil B. De Mille's "Joan the Woman," the first entry in what would be that director's long catalogue of bloated, Bible-quoting spectaculars. Geraldine Farrar, the opera star, neither young nor thin, who plays Joan flings her arms up to Heaven a very great deal. But the action scenes, in which De Mille is clearly trying to steal the palm from D. W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation," were revolutionary for their time. The movie fairly pullulates with people running around in Pied Piper outfits. In the battle scenes at Orléans, De Mille used fourteen hundred men, and he worked them hard, as he did Farrar. According to Agnes de Mille, Cecil's niece, Farrar spent "whole days in a fosse up to her waist in muddy water, a cowboy guard

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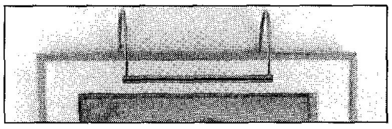

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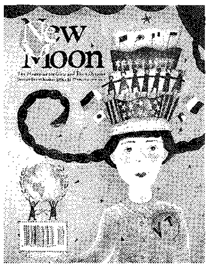

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"Is the rabbit cute?"

around her dressed in bobbed wigs and fourteenth-century hats, fending off broken spears, falling beams and masses of struggling extras." For the closeups at the stake, they doused Farrar in flame-retardant fluid, stuffed ammonia-soaked cotton up her nostrils, surrounded her with oil-filled tanks, and lit them.

The movie was a milestone in the history of cinematic grandiosity yoked to cinematic realism. It was also a significant episode in the history of the political uses of Joan. In the film her tale is enclosed in a frame-narrative featuring an English soldier who, stalled in the trenches of France during the First World War, is inspired by Joan's sacrifice to go on a suicide mission, thus saving the day for his regiment. Released in 1916, "Joan the Woman" was an unequivocal call for the United States to join the fighting in Europe.

In the years that followed, with *entre deux guerres* nationalism, the rise of Fascism, then the Second World War and the Cold War, Joan did further political duty onscreen. One movie that is almost never shown is a 1928 silent, "La Merveilleuse Vie de Jeanne d'Arc," by Marco de Gastyne, a now forgotten Parisian filmmaker of the twenties and thirties. The text is almost hysterically nationalist. The photography, too, glorifies the *patrie*. The battle scenes were shot outside the walls of Carcassonne; the coronation scene at Rheims; the trial at Mont-Saint-Michel. And though Gastyne gives us angels flying in the sky—he likes God as much as France—his focus is on Joan the soldier, with peasants rising up across the land to follow her into battle. The film is clumsily made, but it has a rare poetry. When Joan, side-lit at her parents' hearth, sits listening to neighbors harried by the war, and a little cat that she is holding crawls out of her arms and runs away, we see, with perfect, breathing concreteness, her childhood—actually, her life—slipping away from her. Much of the beauty of the film is owing to its Joan, an unknown, big-nosed seventeen-year-old named Simone Genevois. In the scene where they prepare her for her death she is simply amazing, wiping the sweat and tears off her face.

The medieval scholar Kevin Harty believes that Victor Fleming's 1948 "Joan of Arc" was another political manifesto. In a crucial scene in that movie, Charles pusillanimously declines to take advantage of the victory at Orléans and go after the rest of France. Likewise, as many Americans felt at the time, the United States was foolishly refusing to capitalize on its Second World War victory and go after the Soviet Union. Whatever the specific politics of the film, it has all the smug righteousness of the Cold War period, and nothing in it is smugger than its Joan, Ingrid Bergman. The role was an obvious choice for Bergman. After "Casablanca," "Gaslight," and "The Bells of St. Mary's" (in which she played a nun), she was already a saint to much of the American public. Furthermore, she had starred in the Maxwell Anderson play. As a child, she had idolized Joan—together with Jo March, another hair-cropper, Joan has long been an inspiration to serious-minded girls—and she seems to have felt she didn't actually have to portray this alter ego of hers: she could simply *be* her. "It wasn't like acting at all," she said. And indeed it isn't like acting; she just stalks around in her monobosom armor, looking holy. The film was savaged by the reviewers, and its main effect was to set Bergman up for her fall when, the year after its première, she left her husband and daughter for Roberto Rossellini and, the year after that, bore him an illegitimate child. Posited as a saint, she now seemed all the more a sinner. She was denounced on the floor of the United States Senate.

THOSE are the "epic" Joan movies, but already by 1923 Shaw, in his "Saint Joan," had inaugurated another tradition of Joan-staging—the political analysis, the discussion of issues. Before Shaw, Joan's judges were often portrayed as a pack of cruel, cynical functionaries. Shaw made them honest men. To quote his preface: "If Joan had not been burnt by normally innocent people in the energy of their righteousness her death at their hands would have had no more significance than the Tokyo earthquake, which burnt a great many maidens." In his eyes, Joan's story was a conflict not between good and evil but between good and good—individual good versus public good, as in "Antigone." It was not an exemplary tale, from which one could learn how to be virtuous, but a tragedy, from which one could learn only what it meant to be human.

After Shaw's death, Otto Preminger secured the rights to the play, and the resulting movie was one of the oddest things ever to come out of Hollywood.

To start with, it was two movies: an English one, with people like John Gielgud playing the politicians—Europeans knew what necessity was—and an American movie, with Americans, who presumably knew what personality was, supplying the stars. The second oddity was the stars. For Charles, Preminger chose Richard Widmark, who portrayed the Dauphin as a species of neurological patient (he twitches, he limps) and also, if I'm not mistaken, as the fifties' notion of a homosexual (he sniggers, he pouts). The casting of Joan was made into a contest. Eighteen thousand applications were received (including one from the teen-age Barbra Streisand). Preminger chose a seventeen-year-old unknown, Jean Seberg, from Marshalltown, Iowa, to whom—in the effort, he said, to keep her unspoiled—he gave no training and little direction. Seberg played it pert and baby-talking. You turn your eyes away.

Preminger's "Saint Joan" was preceded by one of the most aggressive publicity campaigns in Hollywood history. Once Seberg had been chosen, the press was invited to her every act of preparation—the fitting of her armor, the cutting of her hair—and to the shooting. Article after article came out, drumming up excitement, and then, when the movie was released, in 1957, the critics walked in and trashed it, singling out Seberg's performance for special contempt. Soon afterward, Preminger sold her contract to Columbia. This early history does not go unmentioned in accounts of how, in 1979, at age forty, Seberg was found wrapped in a blanket and nothing else, "dead for several days" (the *Times* obituary) from a barbiturate overdose, in the back of her Renault on a street in Paris.

OBVIOUSLY, the major job for the Joan chroniclers, on stage or film, was to decide what the story was, what was important about it. Shaw had made a bold choice: Joan's life was about the great world, about politics. Five years later, the Danish film director Carl Dreyer, in his "Passion of Joan of Arc," made the opposite choice: Joan's life was about the inner world, about suffering. For his star he hired Renée Falconetti, a former member of the Comédie Française. A stage actress—"Joan" was the only film she ever made—she could presumably suffer big. To aid in that process, he telescoped the action into one day, from trial to burning. Most of the film is just the trial, a back-and-forth between the examiners, asking their questions—we see them in closeup: their nasty smiles, their sweaty bangs—and Joan, also in tight closeup, giving her replies. Typically, Falconetti pauses for a long time before answering, and weeps, and rolls her eyes to Heaven. There are a number of distasteful accounts of how Dreyer managed to extract from Falconetti this tortured performance. Jean Hugo, who served as one of the film's art directors, reported that every morning, when Falconetti arrived on the set, Dreyer managed to bawl her out for something or other. Once he had reduced her to weeping, he would turn on the cameras.

The film scholar Robin Blaetz retells this story in support of her claim that the history of Joan movies is largely a chronicle of misogyny: "Joan of Arc's chief attraction may lie in the chance to pornographically depict the death of this potent female with chains, ropes, and lascivious camera work." Dreyer's film is regarded as one of the world's great movies—"Falconetti's Joan may be the finest performance ever recorded on film," Pauline Kael has written—but I think Blaetz has a point. The handling of Falconetti is finally oppressive; you feel beaten up by it. (I should add that a fresh print was recently discovered—appropriately, in the broom closet of a Norwegian mental hospital. Dreyer's original negative was destroyed by fire, so he assembled a second version of the movie from outtakes. The second negative was lost in another fire. Reportedly, what we've been watching all these years are damaged copies of that second version, full of fuzz and specks and blur that I, for one, took to be part of the movie's pain. The original, now on video, from Home Vision, is clean as a whistle.)

I'm not the only one who sagged under the weight of Dreyer's Joan. So did Robert Bresson, whose 1962 "Trial of Joan of Arc" is a sort of anti-Dreyer. Bresson follows roughly the same curtailed script—just the trial and the burning—but whereas Dreyer's Joan, before replying to her judges' questions, paused so lengthily for those Murillo-martyr closeups, Bresson's Joan, Flo-

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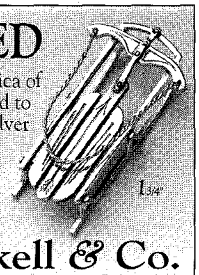
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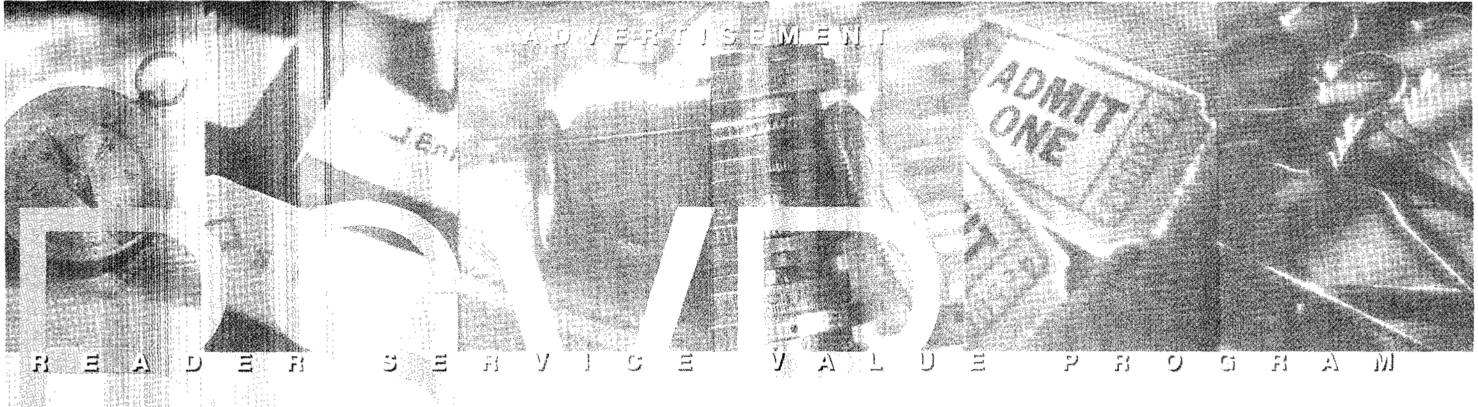
rence Carrez, barely takes a breath before answering. Then she lowers her eyes, lest we sully her with our pity. The trial is not a drama. It is a kind of catechism, something recited rather than enacted. Tellingly, the most poignant shot in the movie is not of Carrez's face but of her little feet, rushing awkwardly, as if she were being prodded from behind, along a muddy path from the prison to the pyre. Overhead, a flock of pigeons takes off into a fathomless sky. Bresson is often described as a Jansenist; this film supports that view. In a way, it is the holiest of all Joan movies—cold, fast (sixty-five minutes), and humbling.

Both Dreyer and Bresson may have been responding to the role that Joan has occupied in French politics. Socialists have claimed her; Communists, too. But for more than a hundred years, ever since France's humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, it has been the right, above all, that has pinned her to its banner. Sprung from the soil, scourge of foreign invaders, Joan became a figurehead for that late-nineteenth-century *Volk*-worship which led directly to Fascism: the Vichy government put her on their posters. Today she is doing similar duty for the National Front's campaign against immigrant workers. Jean-Marie Le Pen, founder of the National Front, calls her his "little sister."

Some of that history may be lurking behind Dreyer's and Bresson's discarding of Joan's military career—a radical step, for she was a soldier above all—and dealing only with her last days. However else the two films differ, both refuse to give us the right's Joan Triumphans; they give us Joan the girl, in big trouble. And I think that in this sense they served as sources for Jacques Rivette's 1994 "Joan the Maid." Probably because of its length—four hours, in the shortest version—Rivette's film has had very limited distribution in the United States, but Facets has just brought it out on videotape. Go get it. It's the best Joan movie ever made. Rivette restores the "epic"—the battles are back—while at the same time keeping a tight focus on the girl. His Joan is Sandrine Bonnaire, who brings to the movie all the self-containment, not to speak of the cheekbones, that she showed in Agnès Varda's "Vagabond." She is young, human—she cries when she's wounded—but there is a kind of magic circle drawn around her. In my favorite scene, she asks her confessor to teach her to write her name. She has letters to send; she wants to sign them properly. We see the two figures framed in light at a window: the big, sweet, football-player-resembling monk and the skinny girl. She has all her dignity—she does not apologize for being illiterate. Still, we feel her exposure, her weakness. (She is a peasant; they will burn her.) Slowly the monk guides her hand. Laboriously she forms the letters: JEHANNE. Rivette's movie is realistic, without Dreyer's cry party; it is abstemious, without Bresson's coldness. Accordingly, it does better than any of its predecessors in portraying Joan's tragic period, which began long before her trial. After the coronation, Charles basically abandoned her (he had got what he wanted), and she was forced to go freelance. In the movie we see her, with maybe forty men, before the sky-high walls of Paris. "Give the city to the King of France!" she yells to the Anglo-Burgundians on the battlements. "Fry in hell!" they yell back. A few minutes later in the film, she is captured.

Now, five years after Rivette, we have the Besson movie. Could it, too, have been a reaction to the right's idea of Joan? Maybe so. By giving her the revenge motive (Catherine's murder), Besson strips her of her holy mission. At the end of the movie, after a bit of recovered-memory therapy with what seems to be her inner psychiatrist—an actual character, indeed Dustin Hoffman, who appears and disappears like Tinkerbell, saying things like "So the memory's returning?"—she admits that she fought for vengeance, and that God didn't necessarily call her. The film also weeps a lot over the horrors of war, as the right is not wont to do. On the other hand, Besson dishes out those horrors with a rare enthusiasm. We get a severed hand, a severed foot, a decapitation. A dog dines at length on a dead man's belly. And, to make it more vivid, all this has a curiously sexual tinge. When blood flows down Joan's face at Orléans, it doesn't look like blood. It's pink and thick and shiny, as is the Communion wine that, soon after



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Catherine's murder, Joan pours down her face, meanwhile crying to Jesus, "I want to be one with you *now!*" What Besson seems to be saying is that, as a result of Catherine's misadventure, sex got linked with violence in Joan's mind. But maybe I'm giving him too much credit. Maybe those two things are just linked in *his* mind, as in the minds of most action-movie directors. His work has an extra twist, though—something about *women* blowing people away, and having nervous breakdowns in the process, because they don't actually want to do these bad things. (See his "La Femme Nikita.") Joan was just adapted to the scenario. The actress-model Milla Jovovich, Besson's ex-wife, plays Joan with bug-eyed frenzy. "She's nuts," one of her comrades-at-arms says. Amen.

None of this, however, will do Joan's reputation any harm. Her cult is big enough to absorb it. There is now a whole discipline of "Johannic studies," together with a subdiscipline of "Johannic-reception studies"—the history of representations of her. The post-modern folk are on her trail: the women's-studies people, the queer-studies people, the deconstructionists. (In a recent essay Steven Weiskopf, of Indiana University, finds that Joan fits a "paradigm of abyssal indeterminacy.") Meanwhile, the devout have not deserted the field. Throughout the Christian world, Joan is venerated in churches and schools—on the Internet, too. Virginia Frohlick, founder of the Saint Joan of Arc Center, in Albuquerque, has a Web site where she tells us about her relationship with Joan, her "very best friend." On another Web site, you can see a picture of Joan's banner, hear the hymn sung by the priests in her army, and, should you be one of those who think that Joan was a transvestite, a lesbian, a feminist, a Protestant, or a Wiccan, get a talking-to from the St. Joan of Arc Anti-Defamation League. There's a Clash of Arms "war game" devoted to Joan; there's a rock group named after her. Three more movies are reportedly in the works. Madonna and Sinead O'Connor have both said they'd like to play the Maid. We haven't yet seen the end of the Johannic reception or, I'll bet, the worst of it, but somehow Joan always slips through the net, small and wiry, brave and glad. ♦

BOOKS

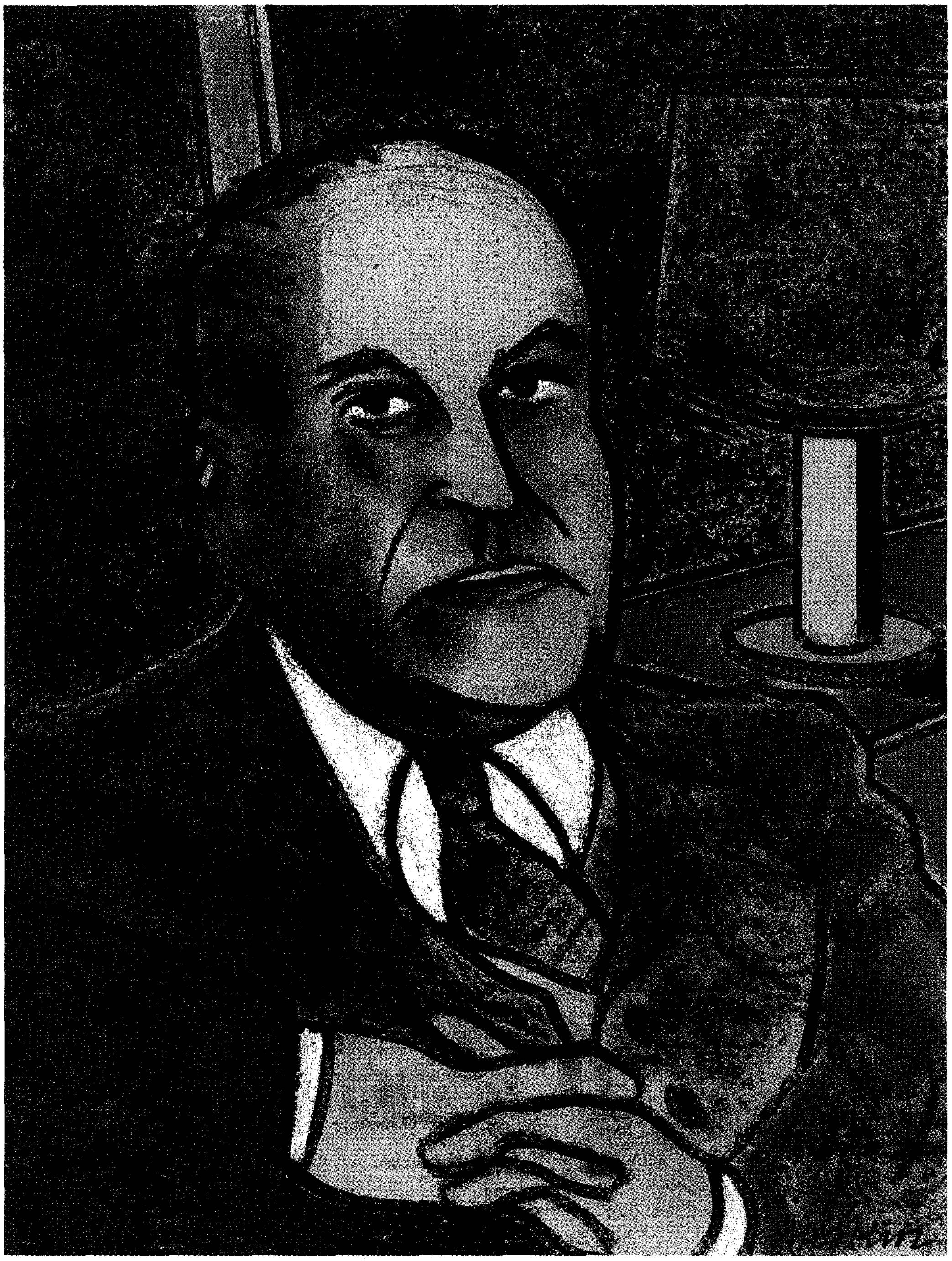
THE TRASHY YEARS

An unfinished novel by the century's most formidable critic.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

After Edmund Wilson, there have been journalistic critics, like John Leonard, and academic critics, like Denis Donoghue, but none who combine zest and authority, an opinionated voice and a scholarly thoroughness in quite the resonant, one might say statesmanlike, Wilsonian style. A keenly interactive man with an above-average appetite for sex, liquor, and conversation, he did not think of himself as primarily a critic—a journalist, rather, and a poet, playwright, and fiction writer. His facility with ideas and texts and languages tended to push his fiction to one side of his general literary enterprise, but he managed to produce an intermittently lively, if strenuously schematic, valentine to the Greenwich Village of the twenties, "I Thought of Daisy" (1929), and a best-seller, "Memoirs of Hecate County" (1946), which possesses a saturnine majesty and passages of groundbreaking sexual realism. He was too much an old-fashioned patrician to soften the truth in his telling of it. This gave his criticism its energy and weight but may have handicapped his fiction: it has frequent, often word-for-word recourse to the journals he faithfully kept throughout his life. His fiction is lumpy, as it were, with transcribed journal entries where an airier penman would have been making things up. Nevertheless, his distinction of mind was such that a reader would think that an uncompleted novel by him, begun and abandoned between the two published ones, would have seen print sooner than twenty-six years after his death, in 1972, and courtesy of a publisher more mainstream than the University of Iowa Press.

The press and the editor, Neale Reinitz, have done a fine job with this little volume, "The Higher Jazz" ($17.95), which is produced in the compact, sensible format that Wilson asked his regular publisher, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, to give his books. Reinitz, a professor emeritus of English at Colorado College, has taken the title from an essay Wilson published in *The New Republic* in 1926 and included in "The American Earthquake" (1958) as "The Problem of the Higher Jazz." In considering recently performed music by Louis Gruenberg, Arthur Honegger, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Paul Whiteman, and Deems Taylor, the *New Republic* essay tackled the problem of "conveying the excitement, the emotion, of the time, which has its popular expression in jazz, in a distinguished musical form." Except for the Copland, Wilson found the attempts too tame. The hero of his novel, which began as one segment of an ambitious narrative, "The Story of the Three Wishes," is a German-American businessman and aspiring composer from Pittsburgh, Fritz Dietrich, who diffidently worries at the rather abstract issue of the higher jazz between drunken parties and bouts of unease with his sexy wife, Caroline. Professor Reinitz, in his introduction and in footnotes grouped at the back, with admirable clarity and care relates the short, inconclusive novel's incidents and characters to those in Wilson's life and the rest of his œuvre. If a text that a writer opted to put aside is posthumously published, it should be done, as here, with scholarly honors, rather than with, say, the minimal editorial apparatus that has accompanied the numerous fragments culled from Hemingway's muddled leavings, as if to encourage in book buyers the illusion of a live master hand still at work.


Wilson the novelist: too much an old-fashioned patrician to soften the truth in his telling of it.

The critic can scarcely find fault with a work the writer himself disowned; like a burglar breaking into a house, one is obliged to search for precious things. It is not hard to imagine why this project finally defeated Wilson: its characters, who are resolutely dissipated and usually silly, make scarcely a move toward dramatizing his grand theme of popular energy versus high art. The novel abruptly ends, if not exactly concludes, with some gnomic Yankee pronouncements by Edgar Rockland, a late-arriving character based on Charles Ives, who *has* managed to compose the higher jazz, full of modern dissonance and tunes, in New Hampshire isolation. In contrast, Fritz fitfully doodles at the piano, and permits a few thoughts of Wilsonian cogency to enter his brain; but his main occupation is keeping up with the social set, or awkwardly overlapping sets, in which he and Caroline find their fledgling marriage enmeshed. She is a version of Wilson's second wife, Margaret Canby, who was to die of a fall in 1932, and who appears in "Hecate County" as the "Western girl" Jo Gates. As that book winds down, the hero is apprehensively contemplating the question of "whether or not I ought, finally, to marry Jo." She has children by a troublesome former husband, is something of a philistine, and has "become more and more addicted to a migratory cocktail set who were mostly far too rich for me and by the thirties had come to disgust me." In "The Higher Jazz," Fritz succumbs to Caroline's "cunning, little thick body" and marries her. He confides in her his hope that they will together give "damn interesting parties—the kind of parties that almost nobody is giving." Yet the parties they give are dishevelled and inharmonious, thanks in part to the sodden intrusions of her former husband and the tireless juvenile frivolity of Fritz's Yale classmate Nick Carter, Nick's platonic playmate Kay Burke, and Kay's idle young lover Bill Shippen, the three of whom incessantly impersonate members of an imaginary family called the Ratsbys.

There is literary history here: Nick is closely based on Robert Benchley and Kay on Dorothy Parker. Wilson's twenties journals record that he found the celebrated Algonquin Round Table crowd a "rather tiresome" collection of provincial and suburban mentalities playing at "New York sophistication," but his fictionalization of Parker, especially, shows a considerable interest. He endeavors to dramatize her romantic turmoil and a suicide attempt, which took an effort of imagination, since, though he and Parker had been colleagues at *Vanity Fair*, he was not an intimate. His portrait of the Algonquin wits here stands as a corrective to their

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BRIEFLY NOTED

The Tale of the Unknown Island, by José Saramago, translated from the Portuguese by Margaret Jull Costa (Harcourt Brace; $16). This pared-down fable, enhanced by Peter Sís's delicate drawings, is not the tour de force that the Nobelist's 1998 novel "Blindness" was, but it shares that book's amused cynicism for absurd social systems and its compassion for the people ensnared by them. There is a man who wants a boat, a cleaning lady who wants the man, and a king who won't answer his palace door. A poetic allegorist at heart, Saramago spills these simple wants and fears onto a broad philosophic plain in order to raise such questions as: What does it mean to step outside of ourselves? Or to walk through a door and not look back?

Nabokov's Blues: The Scientific Odyssey of a Literary Genius, by Kurt Johnson and Steve Coates (Zoland; $27). In 1945, Vladimir Nabokov, an émigré teaching literature at Wellesley, published "Notes on Neotropical Plebejinae," a paper classifying Latin-American butterflies (the "Blues" of the title) that he had studied at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology. The paper was ignored for more than forty years, but in 1987 a group of lepidopterists, Johnson among them, encountered a puzzling specimen in a rainforest in the Dominican Republic. The discovery led to more than a decade of lab and field work—from the cloud forests of the Andes to the dusty attics of countless museums—which eventually vindicated Nabokov's paper. This insidiously charming book teaches readers about the place of lepidoptery in the life sciences and the kinds of questions that natural scientists seek to answer. Whether it belongs to the literature of science or simply to literature is uncertain, but, like Nabokov himself, this volume exemplifies some of the virtues shared by art and science: wit, intelligence, and, above all, meticulousness.

Five Days in London: May, 1940, by John Lukacs (Yale; $19.95). Lukacs's scholarship re-creates with great immediacy the chaotic few days during which, according to the author, Hitler came closest to winning the war: the Belgian king surrendered to the Germans, the French government hinted that France, too, might surrender, and the British Army was trapped at Dunkirk. Lukacs concentrates on the struggle within the British War Cabinet, which pitted the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, against the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, a Tory idol and a friend of the King. The point of contention was Halifax's belief that England should attempt to negotiate a general European settlement with Hitler. Churchill's stubborn refusal won out. The author's equally stubborn digging uncovered a stunning amount of defeatism and intrigue against Churchill by contemporary statesmen.

Night Falls Fast: Understanding Suicide, by Kay Redfield Jamison (Knopf; $26). Suicide is a leading cause of death worldwide, and yet, as Jamison notes in this extensive study, we understand less about the biological and environmental factors that contribute to it than we do about the causes of cancer or AIDS. Jamison, a professor of psychiatry who tried to kill herself when she was twenty-eight, uses historical, genetic, and evolutionary perspectives to explain who commits suicide and why. Her essays about individual cases deliver an almost unbearable picture of the "cumulative despair" that results in suicide, but her research into suicide notes and methods of killing—one man stabbed himself repeatedly with his eyeglasses—is perhaps the greater testament to the urgency of mental anguish.

The Great Shame, by Thomas Keneally (Talese/Doubleday; $35). This brimming history, which examines the effects of the nineteenth-century British policy of transporting Irish prisoners to Australia, makes it clear that Ireland's loss was the world's gain. It follows castoffs like the revolutionary Thomas Francis Meagher, who was convicted of high treason and shipped to Van Diemen's Land in 1849, escaped to America, led the Irish Brigade into battle at Antietam, and became the acting governor of Montana Territory, where he died after falling over the rail of a river steamer. As if Meagher's story weren't enough, Keneally gives us four other eventful lives to follow. The book tends to get bogged down in details, but the author's passion and erudition carry the reader through.

William Eggleston, edited by Gunilla Knape (Hasselblad/Scalo; $42.50). Eggleston is a Memphis eccentric whose approach to color photography transforms the surface banality of his mostly Southern subjects, pushing into new realms the deceptive artlessness of the personal-documentary style forged by Friedlander and Winogrand. The hundred and twelve photos in this volume—which commemorates his receiving the Hasselblad award, in 1998—constitute a sort of greatest hits, selected from thirty years' work. In Eggleston's hands, cheap plastic animals, a deserted stretch of Southern highway, and a naked light bulb hanging from a blood-red ceiling all pulsate with hyperreal hues, eerily opaque yet verging on the revelatory.

Ethel & Ernest, by Raymond Briggs (Knopf; $21). A portrait of his parents' marriage by a popular British children's book author and illustrator, this unusual comic book also works as a kind of informal social history. Ethel and Ernest's modest aspirations and patient struggles sketch a picture of everyday British life from the Depression to the countercultural rumblings of the sixties. They are an engaging pair—she a former maid who balks at anything "common," he a milkman who enjoys teasing his wife with strident leftist views—who become increasingly lost in the shifting social landscape. Their incomprehension of their son's unconventional artistic ways is all the more poignant for their refusal to complain.

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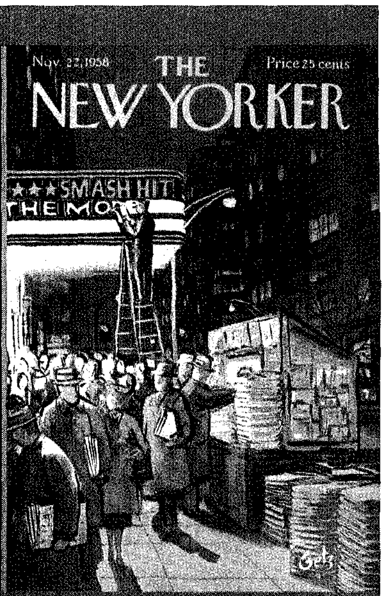

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easy glamorization and as a case study of a peculiar form of social morbidity—an extended jest whose obsessed perpetrators "tend to lose the sense of reality" and "shut out the rest of the world and become incapable of cooperating with it." A sense of wasted talent broods over the parties, which run one into another blearily, and Wilson, having labored on this slight, distracted tale for some of 1941 and 1942, accumulating two hundred and seven pages of handwritten yellow legal-size lined paper, evidently decided it would be a waste of his own talent to continue. He abandoned his alter ego, who seems neither very German nor very musical, and turned to writing the six episodes of "Hecate County" from the viewpoint of a different alter ego, an art critic who is both more direct and more detached than Fritz, embodying the self, as we read in "Hecate County" 's final pages, "for which I really lived and which kept up its austere virtue, the self which had survived through these trashy years."

That self speaks in "The Higher Jazz" in the general tone, bemused but not resigned to bemusement, and in images, many lifted from the journals, of clarity and instinctive affection. The most glowing chapter is the first, "A Weekend at the Shore," taking Fritz and Caroline to a hotel in Sea Bright, a northern New Jersey resort town adjacent to Wilson's native Red Bank. In this somewhat trashy but deeply familiar setting, the hero enjoys the sea, sex, and booze in shifting proportions, and unprogrammatically records how

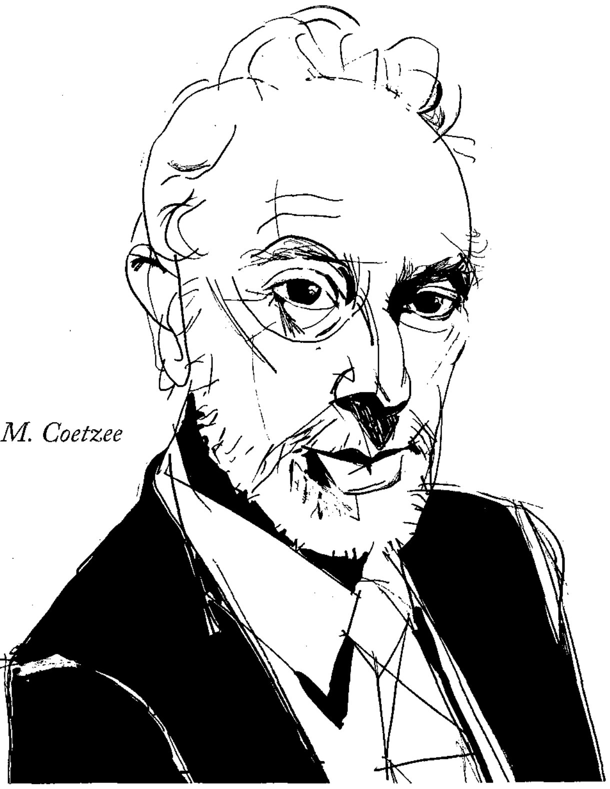
> we were let into a fine corner room that looked out two ways on the ocean and that had twin white iron beds, furniture with that slightly bleached look that everything gets beside the sea, and a glass pitcher with inverted tumblers sitting on a glass tray.

With this transparent moment—"that slightly bleached look"—the dour Wilsonian perspective lets in bare reality and, somehow, emotion with it: we glimpse as through blowing curtains the lyric spirit of his friend Scott Fitzgerald. How aggravating it must have been for Wilson, generous as he was in his reconnaissance of literature, to perceive that his wastrel, alcoholic, relatively ignorant classmate from Princeton possessed, in his fiction, a liveliness, concision, and flashing beauty beyond any his own, superior mind could muster. "The Higher Jazz" gives us a Fitzgerald that wasn't, from a Wilson that formidably was. ♦

A NEW MAN

The force of grace in South Africa.

BY DAPHNE MERKIN



J.M. Coetzee

"FOR a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well." So opens J. M. Coetzee's new novel, "Disgrace," with a brisk, sophisticated nod at the intransigencies of the flesh. Immediately, the reader wants to hear more, for who isn't curious to know how others have solved the problem of sex? Our interest assured, the novelist gets down to work, creating a lived-in atmosphere for his fiction, establishing points of entry. We discover in the next couple of sentences that this unnamed character drives every Thursday afternoon to meet a woman named Soraya, who waits for him in front of Room No. 13, at a place called Windsor Mansions. By the end of this short but impressively packed paragraph, we have been brought forward so quickly that our eye is pressed right up against the keyhole: Soraya drops her robe to reveal a "honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun," and he, the fifty-two-year-old man, kisses her breasts as a prelude to making love.

Of course, the best novels have always lured us in by rendering the world immediately familiar, while at the same time holding out the promise of some newly hatched awareness that will make us perceive what we had formerly overlooked. That is, we expect this man, whose name and circumstances we will shortly learn, to be representative of some condition—some malaise, most likely—beyond his own. What we don't expect, and rarely get, is a novel that not only works its spell but makes it impossible for us to lay it aside once we've finished reading it—that makes demands upon us not by virtue of a self-conscious "message" but by virtue of a narrative momentum that is itself expressive of moral urgency.

Coetzee is the most cerebral and, with the exception of Breyten Breytenbach, the least given to sentimentality of the talented novelists to have come out of South Africa. He writes with a dark, impacted intelligence—the kind that has led critics to describe his books as "obscure" and "difficult" even as they admire the seriousness of his intentions. Indeed, many of his novels, including "Waiting for the Barbarians" and "Life & Times of Michael K.," which won the Booker Prize in 1983, have a weighty, allegorical tone. "Disgrace" has just made literary history by winning Coetzee an unprecedented second Booker, and what seems striking about it, right from the start, is its almost unnatural sense of poise, the way it takes you by the hand and leads you through recognizable terrain only to pull the ground out from under you with such accumulated force that by the time you come to the last sentence you feel as if you'd lost your bearings, and you aren't sure how useful they'd be now, anyway.

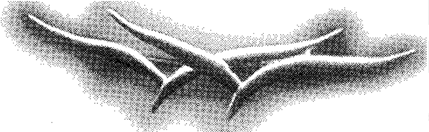
David Lurie, our fifty-two-year-old, whose life will be transformed in the course of the novel, is "a hangover from the past," a disengaged professor of modern languages who dreams of writing a chamber opera about Byron's love life, and who has addressed his own needs by paying for regular afternoon sessions with Soraya, who works for an escort service. ("She was on their books under 'Exotic.' ") Marooned in the post-apartheid wasteland of Cape Technical University, where his students are "post-Christian, post-historical, post-literate," Lurie has been downgraded to teaching "communication skills." Although he finds the very premise of this non-discipline ridiculous, and is by his own account an indifferent teacher, he continues in his job for both practical and existential reasons—because he needs the money, and for the lesson in humiliation that it provides. Or so he would have us believe, as a superannuated intellectual schooled in the bleak uses of irony, who recognizes that even erotic bliss is relative: "It surprises him that ninety minutes a week of a woman's company are enough to make him happy, who used to think he needed a wife, home, a marriage."

Lurie's neatly arranged world is set suddenly askew when he chances upon Soraya walking ahead of him on the street one Saturday morning with two young boys at her side. Her glance catches his when he passes the window of a restaurant where she and the children are eating, and though the two of them continue to meet for a while, there is a subtle shift in their once affectionate relations, "a growing coolness as she transforms herself into just another woman and him into just another client." Soon after this, Soraya quits the agency, citing a family illness. Lurie, practiced womanizer that he is, tries other amorous options—a new escort, a secretary from his department—but, burdened by "a certain residue of sadness," he eventually hires a detective to track down Soraya. When he calls her at home, she is unexpectedly shrill and rejecting. "But then," he muses, "what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen's nest, into the home of her cubs?"

So far, so good. It is only the end of Chapter 1, and we think we have a clear notion of the novel before us, an apparent departure for Coetzee: a campus spoof, laced with racial tension, about an old-style white imperialist who finds himself living in the age of Mandela. But what we're about to get is something larger—an inquiry into the limits of empathy, and into the collective price we pay for those limits.

Lurie now takes a wrong step, and it will bring about the disgrace of the title. He has an affair with a pretty young student, who is both complicit and resisting: "Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck." The girl, whose motives remain opaque, sleeps with Lurie several times and then brings a harassment suit against him. He is tried before a disciplinary committee, and, after failing to act suitably penitent—he unblushingly characterizes himself to the committee members as "a servant of Eros"—he loses his job, and flees the censorious press and the recriminations of his ex-wife by decamping to the Eastern Cape. There, hidden away with his daughter, Lucy, a lesbian hippie who scrapes together a living by keeping dog kennels and selling produce from the vegetable garden on her remote smallholding, he hopes to clear his head and shake off the shame that trails him.

Pity the poor character who seeks a safe haven in Coetzee's universe. Although one of this writer's gifts is the ability to create fictional characters who act disconcertingly like real people, never staying true to the selves previously ascribed to them, he is also very much in pitiless command of the situation; one thinks of him as a night guard up on the prison tower, passing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a cold searchlight over any who would try to escape his surveillance. Everything bad that could possibly happen happens, and then some: Lucy, whose return to barefoot basics is clearly a reaction against her father's embrace of highbrow consolations and sensual distractions, is raped by three black men, who also douse Lurie with methylated spirits, set him on fire, and go off in his car. "He is helpless," Lurie splutters at himself in the wake of the debacle, "an Aunt Sally, a figure from a cartoon, a missionary in cassock and topi waiting with clasped hands and upcast eyes while the savages jaw away in their own lingo preparatory to plunging him into their boiling cauldron."

But in Coetzee's anarchic, impoverished South Africa a father's righteous rage is a daughter's voluntary abjection: Lucy refuses to press charges, despite the entreaties of Lurie, who is appalled by her guilt-ridden acceptance of the rape, and despite the fact that one of her young tormentors appears to be connected to a black farmer who rents land from her and was mysteriously absent on the day of the attack. She retreats further and further into anomie while Lurie, his handsome face burned and bandaged beyond recognition, keeps himself busy by doing chores and helping out at an animal shelter run by Lucy's "dumpy" and idealistic friend Bev Shaw. Slowly, Lurie, having always been leery of women like Bev and his daughter—who "make no effort to be attractive," and who detect a larger metaphoric abuse in the ill-treatment of animals—sloughs off his old secular egotism. By the novel's end, he has been reduced (or elevated, for that is surely how Coetzee means us to understand it) to contemplating simpler truths. He finds beauty even in the back of his daughter's knees, "the least beautiful part of a woman's body," and he has come to accept that the enormous violations of South African history can be met only with absurdly small acts of recompense, such as helping to ease the final moments of dogs and cats whose turn it is to be put down: "He and Bev do not speak. He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love."

"DISGRACE" is not a hard or obscure book—it is, among other things, compulsively readable—but what it may well be is an authentically spiritual document, a lament for the soul of a disgraced century. Coetzee, whose style has often been called "thrifty," writes with a scalpel-like economy of effect; his sentences are coiled springs, and the energy they release would take other writers pages to summon. He rarely pauses for comic relief or for making nice to a character, and the waking nightmare of his novels offers little to those who long for heartening assurances. But, whereas some of his earlier work bordered on the overtly sermonic, "Disgrace" has the schematic power of a fable without the "Listen, children" preachiness. Coetzee has condensed the metafictional and moral concerns of his other novels—the nature of literary realism and the solitary confinement of the self, the cathartic potential of art as set against brute actuality, the interaction of parent and child as a microcosm of domination—and found an innovative means of imbuing narrative itself with metaphysical purpose. We can certainly sense the import of his themes—they spring up like bitter stalks between the narrow spaces in his prose—but it is also possible to read "Disgrace" as a postmodern suspense story, in which the only conclusion offered is a modest anticlimax, a man carrying a sick dog to the surgery. Either way, this novel, written in the same "shadow of grief" that falls over Lurie as he muses on how alone all creatures are, leaves you in a state of chastened reflection. ♦

PYRRHIC VICTORY DEPARTMENT

[*From the Ithaca (N.Y.) Journal*]

What happened was this: Harry had been sitting quietly, watching the water, attempting to peer into the depth. The trout, according to the newspaper account, jumped from the water and seized the boy on his nose, inflicting a long gash that bled profusely.

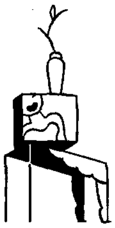
The boy, startled at having hooked a fish on his nose, jerked back, and so, when the fish let go of Harry's nose, it fell into the boat, whereupon Mrs. Morse whacked it with the oar.

ON TELEVISION

UNIQUE NEW YORK

A public-television history of the city that never sleeps.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



Ric Burns's epic-length documentary on New York City (titled, functionally, "New York: A Documentary Film"), which will be seen on PBS for five nights beginning this Sunday, was made possible by the success, nine years ago, of "The Civil War," which he and his older brother, Ken Burns, produced. That series proved that good television didn't, oddly enough, require good visuals. (Though it certainly didn't hurt the filmmakers that the Civil War's coinciding with the rise of photography enabled them to effectively show the face—the literal, weary, dirty, bloody face—of battle.) You didn't need action, you didn't need movement; nothing much actually had to *happen* on the screen. What you did need—in addition to a good, rich subject—was words, music, and, most important, voices. In so many moments in "The Civil War," those elements came together in a way that brought history vividly, heartbreakingly alive, perhaps never more memorably than when Paul Roebling, speaking over the sweet, melancholy strains of the show's theme, "Ashokan Farewell," read a letter that Sullivan Ballou, a Rhode Island soldier, wrote to his wife a week before he was killed, in the First Battle of Bull Run. Everything that was at stake in the war, everything that was lost, is contained in this moment, and, testifying to the fact that its power doesn't rely on pictures, it has pride of place as the closing number, as it were, on the CD of the "Civil War" soundtrack.

"New York," which Burns produced with Lisa Ades, his collaborator on several earlier PBS documentaries, essentially follows the format of "The Civil War," an approach that has become the gold standard for historical edutainment. Unseen actors, with distinctive, and often recognizable, voices, read contemporary letters and literature and accounts of events. Experts, some famous, some not, punctuate and interpret the information that's unfurled, in a stately, authoritative tone, by the narrator, David Ogden Stiers. (Stiers played the upper-crust Major Winchester on "M*A*S*H.") Appropriate sound effects register subliminally, making the show more "real"—we hear the occasional barking dog and the cries of seagulls. Underneath it all, music provides thematic connections and a current of emotion. In "The Civil War," the camera work involved slowly panning across, or up, or down archival photographs and drawings and maps, and that technique is used in abundance in "New York" as well. There are also many—way too many—sweeping aerial views of today's skyline, used to underscore sweeping comments about the city. In the case of both documentaries, the subjects, as different as they

The almost finished Empire State Building, photographed by Lewis Hine in 1930.

are, were ripe: we all know something about them, but not, perhaps, as much as we think we do. People's "sense" of the city's history probably comes in many cases from museum gift shops, with their postcards of old New York: skaters in Central Park, down the hill from the Dakota; Steichen's twilight pictures of the Flatiron Building; the sun pouring down on hatted travellers in the old Pennsylvania Station waiting room. (This last image is on the back cover of the tie-in book, a handsome but nearly unliftable volume that explores some nooks and crannies of the city which the show couldn't accommodate.)

Still, taking on New York seems like asking for trouble. To write about the city is to enter an obstacle course of truisms and trumpery: sure, you can try to veer away from quoting, say, E. B. White's "Here Is New York" or Rodgers and Hart's "Manhattan," but it's hard to maneuver without somehow, at some point, skidding into a ten-cliché pileup. "New York," however, isn't just a celebration of New York; it's a showcase of balance, diversity, and fairness, and it means to portray the city in the round. Its segments have titles like "Order and Disorder" and "Sunshine and Shadow." It's New York for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health. The show turns out, more or less, to have the city's number. The keynote is struck by Brendan Gill, near the beginning of Episode One, when he says, "New York City was founded by the Dutch. The Dutch didn't give a damn about anything except making money." (Gill, who died two years ago, appears several times in "New York"; for those who knew him and miss him, it's great to see his face again. One other writer in the series, Alfred Kazin, who is on camera only a few times, unfortunately, has also died since participating in the film.) Gill's comment refreshingly punctures the preceding introduction, in which the narrator says that the "great city that would rise" around the waters that Henry Hudson navigated in 1609 "would be dedicated to a crucial experiment . . . the exhilarating, often harrowing experiment to see whether all the peoples of the world could live together in a single place." If New York is an experiment, I'd like to have a few words with the scientist who cooked it up; the idea that the city is dedicated to anything, that it has intention of any kind, is ridiculous. New York, where the indifference of capital to anything in its path has largely defined the city's psychic and physical landscape, is the capital of indifference.

It is precisely that indifference which has enabled so many forces to push and pull at one another with such vivid, extreme consequences, and no one in the series is better at conveying the nature and the power of those forces than Mike Wallace. No—not *that* Mike Wallace. This one is a professor of history at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the co-author of "Gotham," a history of New York until 1898, which won the Pulitzer Prize this year. (It, too, is not for the skinny-armed reader.) Wallace is "New York" 's Shelby Foote, the historian whose Virgilian role in "The Civil War" made him a public-televison matinée idol (he received offers of marriage and related amorous propositions after the series aired); Wallace even has the same gray hair and beard as Foote, but, instead of laid-back Southern charm and gravitas, he projects eager-beaver, boyish curiosity about how the city works, and at times he seems to be about to leap out of his chair. He has a tremendous grasp of every phase and aspect of the city's history (and he consequently has more face time than any other commentator), and, unlike some of the literary New Yorkers seen on-screen in this series, he never merely states the obvious. Trying to explain the wide reach and the muscle of the Dutch West India Company, which owned and operated New Amsterdam in the mid-seventeenth century, he likens it to "Exxon with guns." Later on, talking about the expansion of the transportation system in the early part of the twentieth century, he says, "For many, many years, most of the railroads got to the Hudson River and stopped dead. I mean, the iron horse is kind of pawing the water impotently." You get a real sense of human frustration and desire as a driving force of progress.

"NEW YORK" packs in an astonishing amount of material very coherently, but, unlike "The Civil War," it doesn't pack much of an emotional punch. New York, after all, is not a "cause," and it's not a tragedy. The story of New York, repeated over and over again throughout its history, is basically: out with the old, in with the new. (Which is not to say that the city hasn't evolved, and improved, in countless ways.) The drama of the city is to a great extent a numerical one—the narrator is constantly rattling off tallies of the city's immigrants, minorities, acreage, factories, millionaires. With four hundred years to cover in twelve hours (the final two hours of the documentary will be aired next spring), the show rarely focusses on individuals. In a PBS program last November about America in the year 1900 (like "New York," it was part of the "American Experience" series), the filmmakers included the story of a family of Finnish immigrants in Utah who lost five sons in a mining disaster, and a descendant spoke on camera about the impact of the loss on her family, bringing to life, nearly a hundred years later and in a personal way, a story of unimaginable pain. Except to reinforce the theme of money-consciousness that runs unbroken from the city's earliest days to the present, "New York" doesn't do much to create a sense in viewers that they have a personal stake in the city, or any connection to its past. (Two famously ethnic New Yorkers, Pete Hamill and Martin Scorsese, do talk a little bit about their families' experience as immigrants in the city.) Perhaps this demonstrates that, as much as Ric Burns loves New York, he wants to acknowledge that it is, at heart, a lonely town. He uses, as a leitmotiv, the lovely and sad Irish tune " 'Tis the Last Rose of Summer"; it functions as a wordless, broody reminder all through the film of transience and mortality, which is the bass line that has always grounded the city's sometimes shrill, sometimes dazzling melody of newer, bigger, richer, faster. ♦

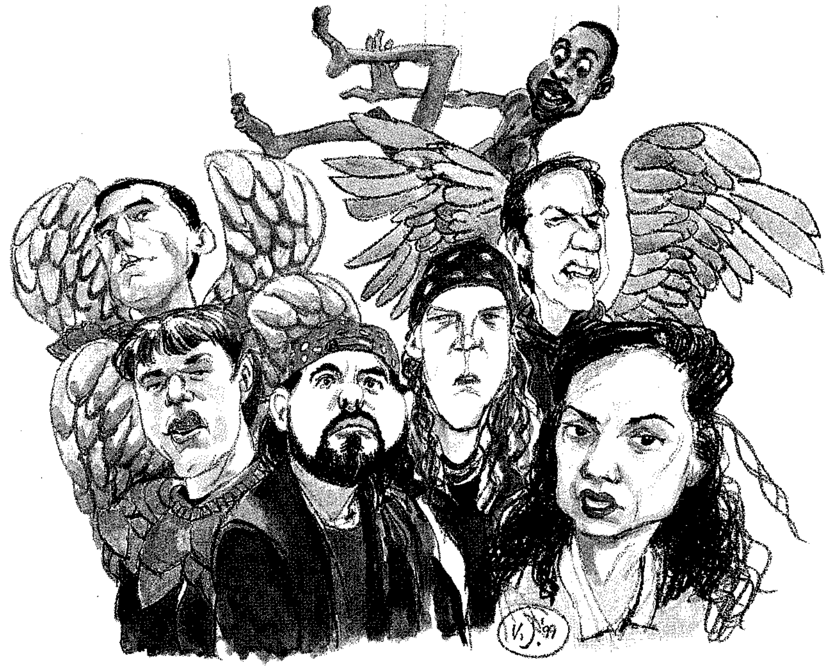
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BEYOND BELIEF

Kevin Smith's irreverent "Dogma"; Wayne Wang's "Anywhere But Here."

BY ANTHONY LANE

IN the final scene of the new Kevin Smith movie, "Dogma," there is a cameo appearance by the Almighty. It is often said that directing a film is the closest we wretched mortals come to playing God, but actually picking a performer to assume the role is a hefty challenge. One's mind drifts toward Charlton Heston, whose deity would at least pack serious heat, or to James Earl Jones, who beefed up his credentials by appearing in "The Lion King" as the great cat in the sky; Kevin Smith, however, has less orthodox plans. His God is played by Alanis Morissette. In a white Christian Lacroix bustier. With boxer shorts underneath. That's "Dogma" for you. The film shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.



Ruffling religious feathers: A bearded Smith and the cast of "Dogma."

The rest of the casting may provide some clues as to the identity—or, at any rate, the swirling flavors—of this curious enterprise. Matt Damon and Ben Affleck play a couple of angels named Loki and Bartleby. They were once avengers, charged with raining sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah, but then, in a flourish of divine irony, they were exiled to Wisconsin. Now they have spotted a loophole in the Church's teaching, which should allow them to reënter Heaven. If they succeed, then God will be proved wrong; as a result, all that is and was and shall be, the height and depth of Creation, will be unmade in the blink of an eye, which could be annoying if you have Yankees tickets for next season. The task of saving the universe falls to Bethany (Linda Fiorentino), a wavering Catholic who works in an abortion clinic; she is aided by Metatron (Alan Rickman), a supernatural spokesperson, and by Rufus (Chris Rock), who claims that he was the thirteenth apostle and a close personal friend of Jesus Christ—"Know him? Nigger owes me twelve bucks." And so on. If you think you smell a movie that is straining a little too hard to make mischief, you're on the right track.

"Dogma" received a free publicity

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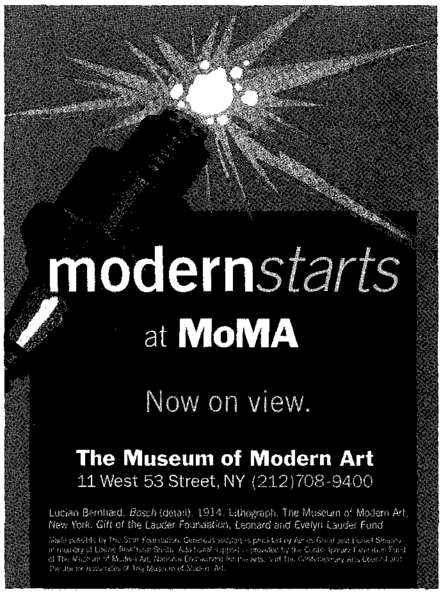

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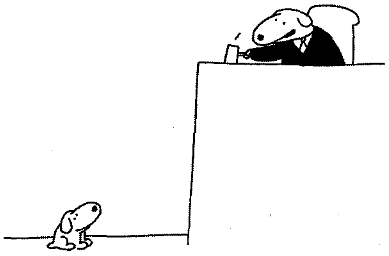

"Not guilty, because puppies do these things."

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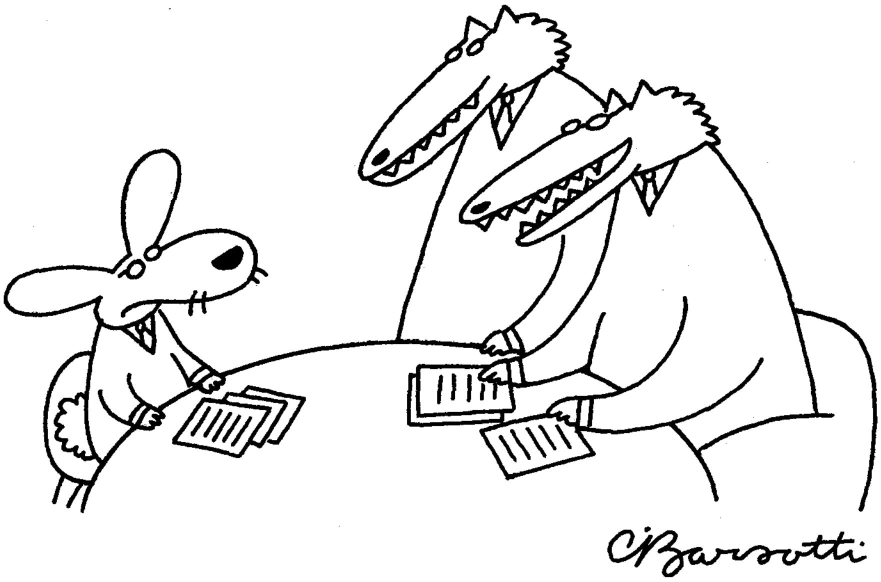
hike from the Catholic League, which has complained of irreverence; like the mayor of New York, the league has yet to realize that, in this age of the Devil's own spin, outraged protestation is a sweet sales boost for the offending product. The same people who visit "Sensation," at the Brooklyn Museum, to see what the fuss is about will line up for "Dogma" in the hope of spiritual shock. They may be disappointed; the clergy take a kicking, as you might expect, but it's nothing compared with the patient, tranquil savaging of religious practice that ran through the career of Luis Buñuel. Smith is a suburban absurdist, not a satirist, and his portrait of a golf-mad New Jersey cardinal (George Carlin) is so broad and silly that it does no one any harm. In fact, if there are doctrinal quibbles in this movie, they feel touchingly old-fashioned; the notion that Jesus was black and that God could, or should, be female will hardly ruffle the feathers of revisionist theologians, and Smith's trippy wish that we should believe in belief, without any of those nasty human structures like churches to get in the way, was a staple of free-thinking faith long before God, on a rainy Saturday night, invented the movies.

Once you have peeled away the bother surrounding this film, there is a knockabout pleasure to be had from what remains; it's closer to "Monty Python's Life of Brian" than to the graceful impieties of Godard's "Hail, Mary" or Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ." To laud "Dogma" as the most visually appealing of Kevin Smith's movies isn't saying much, since "Clerks" and "Mallrats" had all the appeal of old newspaper clippings, and, apart from the angels' rustling wings, the new work maintains the high standard of cheesiness. But the beat and rush of Smith's dialogue just about keeps the conceit aloft, and, like the Python gang, he wrings easy bathos out of Holy Writ—God is described as "lonely but funny," which seems about right. The one thing that offended me was the jokey disclaimer at the start, referring to "this trifle of a movie," and stating that it was not meant to be inflammatory. This is too craven by half: either you have the courage of your comedy or you don't. A truly blasphemous film would be an honorably rare event, and the will to inflame is invariably a tribute to the religion that it scalds. Whether "Dogma" is evil incarnate or a goofy muddle, God only knows; either way, She can handle it.

THE latest Wayne Wang picture, "Anywhere But Here," begins with Susan Sarandon driving a big car across a desert landscape. You think, Hey, didn't they motor off the cliff at the end of that movie? And where did Geena Davis go? The ghost of "Thelma and Louise" trails ahead of Wang's film, raising dust; we get the same impatience dressed up as yearning, and, from Sarandon, the same motor-mouthed determination to have her own way. This time she plays Adele August, who just quit her second husband; now she and her teen-age daughter, Ann (Natalie Portman), are travelling from Wiscon-



"There. Now it's all on paper. Feel better?"

sin—obviously the joke state of the week—to Beverly Hills. In Adele's view, the road is pure yellow brick, and the Oz of Los Angeles will glitter with good jobs. In Ann's view, the whole thing stinks.

From here on, dangerously little happens. The two of them arrive safely, try the beds at the Beverly Hills Hotel, check into a Travelodge, and then into a succession of cruddy apartments. The rest of the film resounds to the lilting strains of domesticated crabbiness; mother and daughter spend so much time arguing that you know it can merely be a matter of time—almost two hours, in fact—before they will be snuffling the words "I love you" in an airport departure lounge. If movies are to be believed, airports are permanently knee-deep in tears. Fortunately, movies are not to be believed.

"Anywhere But Here" should by rights be unendurable. It suffers from puzzling gulfs of logic; one moment the lights in the apartment go off because Adele can't pay the bill, the next she and Ann are stacking up on Christmas gifts. Even more bewildering is the sex, or the tragic lack of it. Wang and his screenwriter, Alvin Sargent, are so busy supplying Susan Sarandon with scraps of sub-philosophy—"When life gets rough, and you only have a dime in your pocket, go out and get your shoes shined"—that they forget the lady has a voluptuous reputation to keep up. To make amends, she suddenly turns flirty and starts sucking olives at an orthodontist named Dr. Spritzer (Hart Bochner), who then flosses her off and breaks her heart. End of sex, at least until Ann decides to try it for herself. A friend called Peter (Corbin Allred) declares that he wants to kiss her. "What for?" Ann asks. He says he wants to part her lips with his tongue. "And then what?" she asks. "I don't know," he replies.

But she knows; or, rather, Natalie Portman gives a riveting impersonation of someone who badly wants to know. "Anywhere But Here" is Portman's movie, all the way; she aims to look sulky and straggle-haired, but in truth her beauty has now become so disabling that you should not attempt to drive or operate heavy machinery for twelve hours after viewing this picture. The most heinous crime ever perpetrated by George Lucas was to cast Portman in "The Phantom Menace" and then belabor her with that red robe, the geisha lipstick, and a couple of cow horns strapped to the side of her head. The poor girl looked deep-frozen, and it's a relief to watch her thaw under Wayne Wang's more benign attention. With the instinctive, weirdly innocent cruelty of adolescence, she toys with the movie's sentimentality and spurns it; the brisk hug that she administers to a beloved cousin—at the airport, of course—is chilly with suppressed adoration, and, when she finally locks lips with the hapless Peter, her eyes close more in needy perplexity than swoon.

Portman owes much to the director of photography, Roger Deakins, who is absolutely on her case; just as he leaves a California beach looking bleached and stranded, under sunlight as white as a bone, so he refuses to linger on Portman or lush her up. Her radiance, he sees, can take care of itself, so he lodges her in unlovely compositions; just wait for the image of Annie, garbed in funereal black for a Christmas party, lolling and kicking with indecision in an outdoor passageway, with a plastic Santa at the rim of the frame. It's an unimprovable snapshot of teen tension, and it stresses how strong American movies are these days when it comes to the no man's land (or, far richer territory, the no woman's land) between childhood and maturity; I would rather watch Portman and Christina Ricci, with their quick-change flips from kidding to gravity, than any of the more ripe and rooted stars. "Anywhere But Here" may be long and nagging, but Natalie Portman disproves the title; when she's onscreen, you want to be there and nowhere else. ♦

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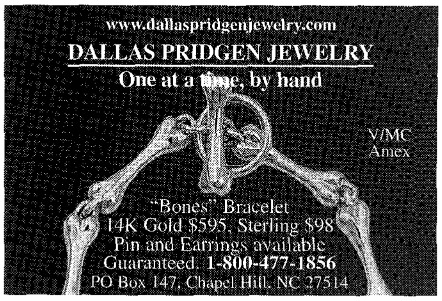

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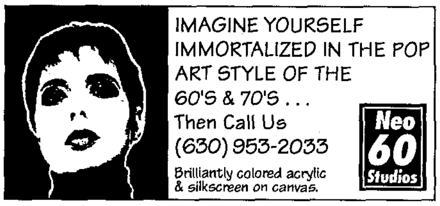

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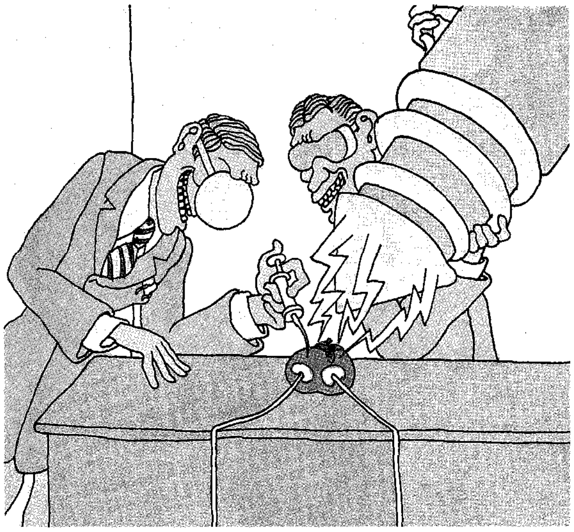
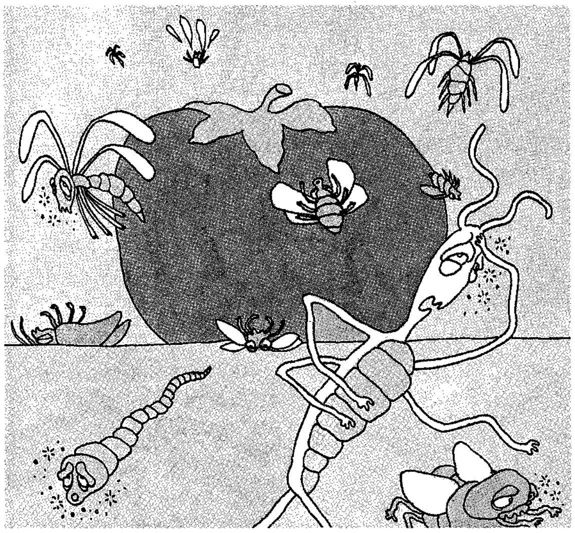
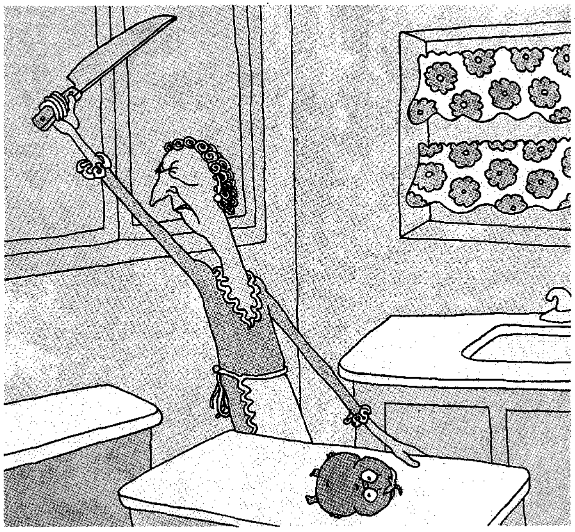


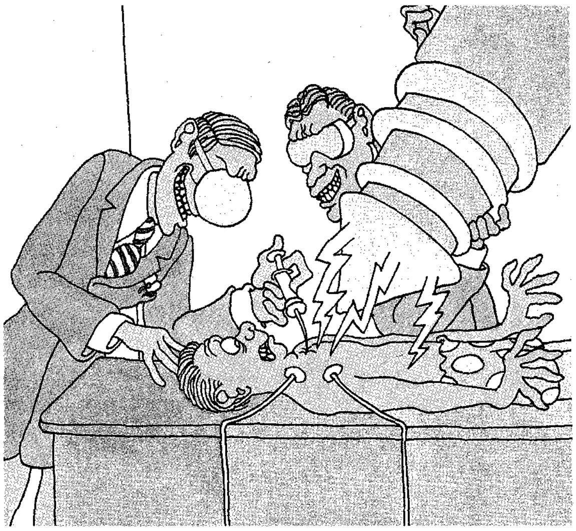
There have been outcries against our nation's efforts to genetically manipulate the food we eat and export.



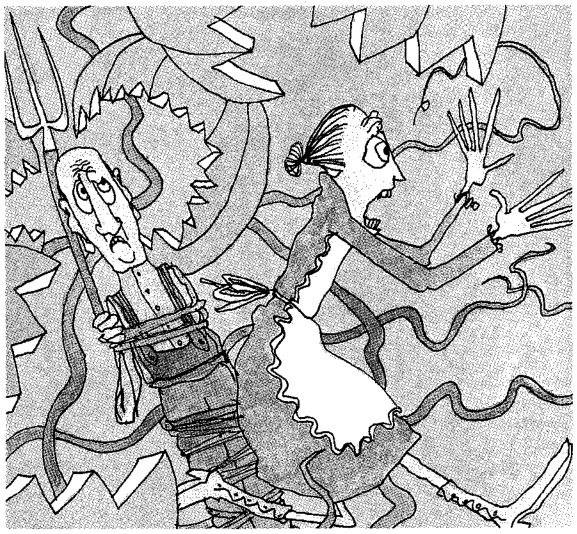
The big corporations claim they're only helping edibles fight off bugs and other natural enemies.



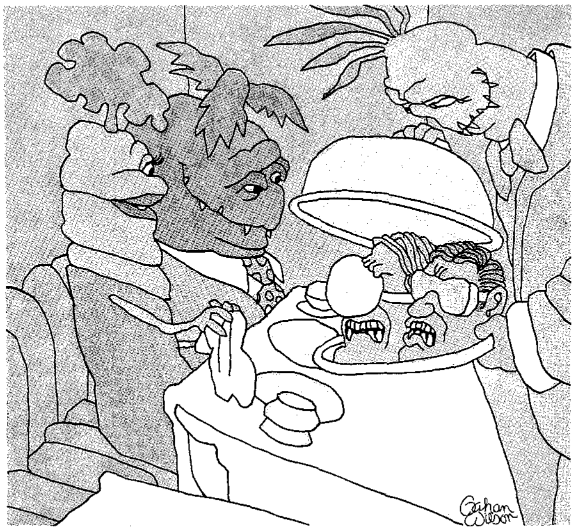
They say that consumers who worry about the use of human-genome technology suffer from overactive imaginations.



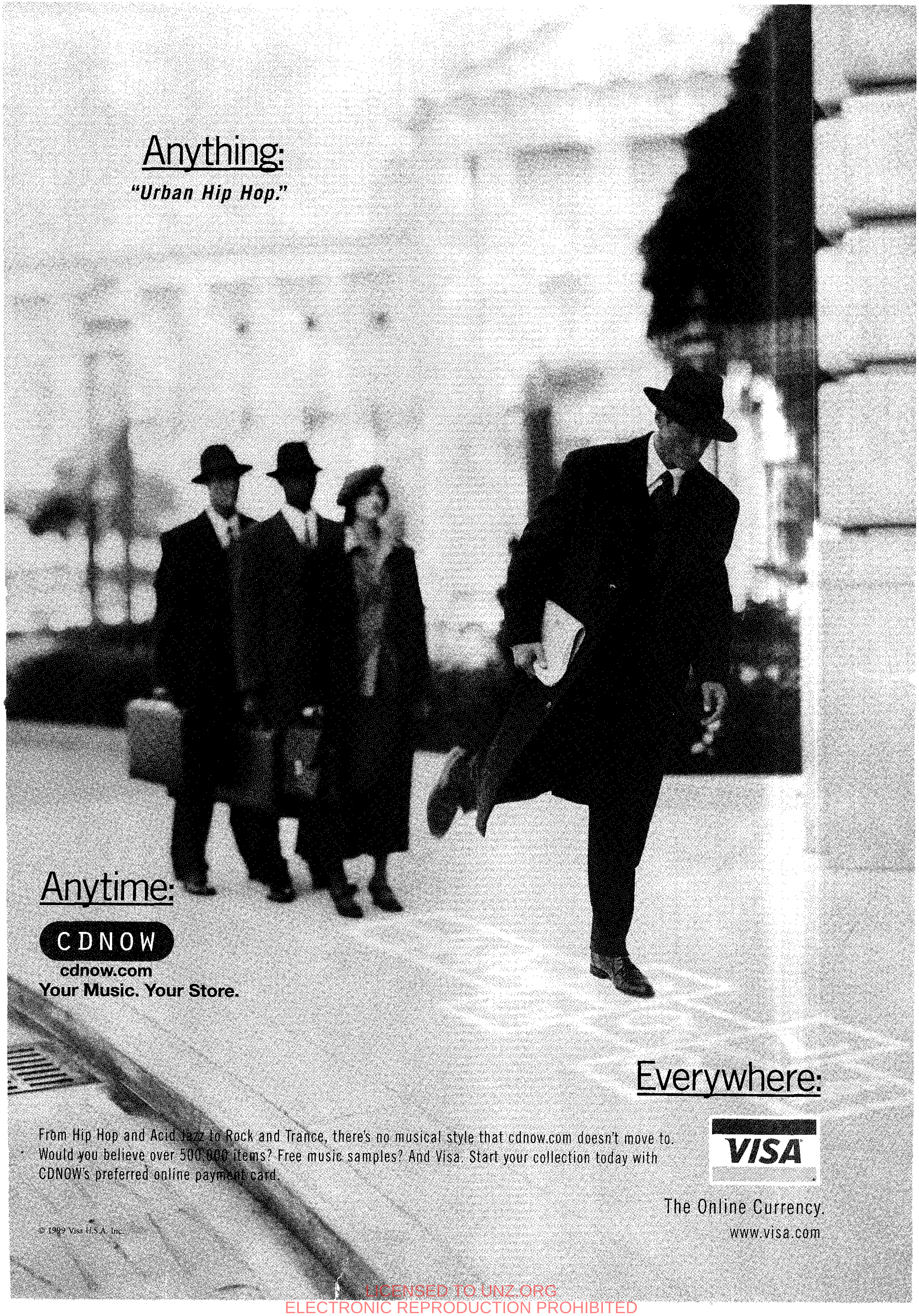
It hasn't occurred to them that unless we slow down this acceleration of evolution or enact a similar program for ourselves . . .



our food's increasing ability to adapt to a hostile environment may result in a reversal of the food chain.



And that would serve us right.



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